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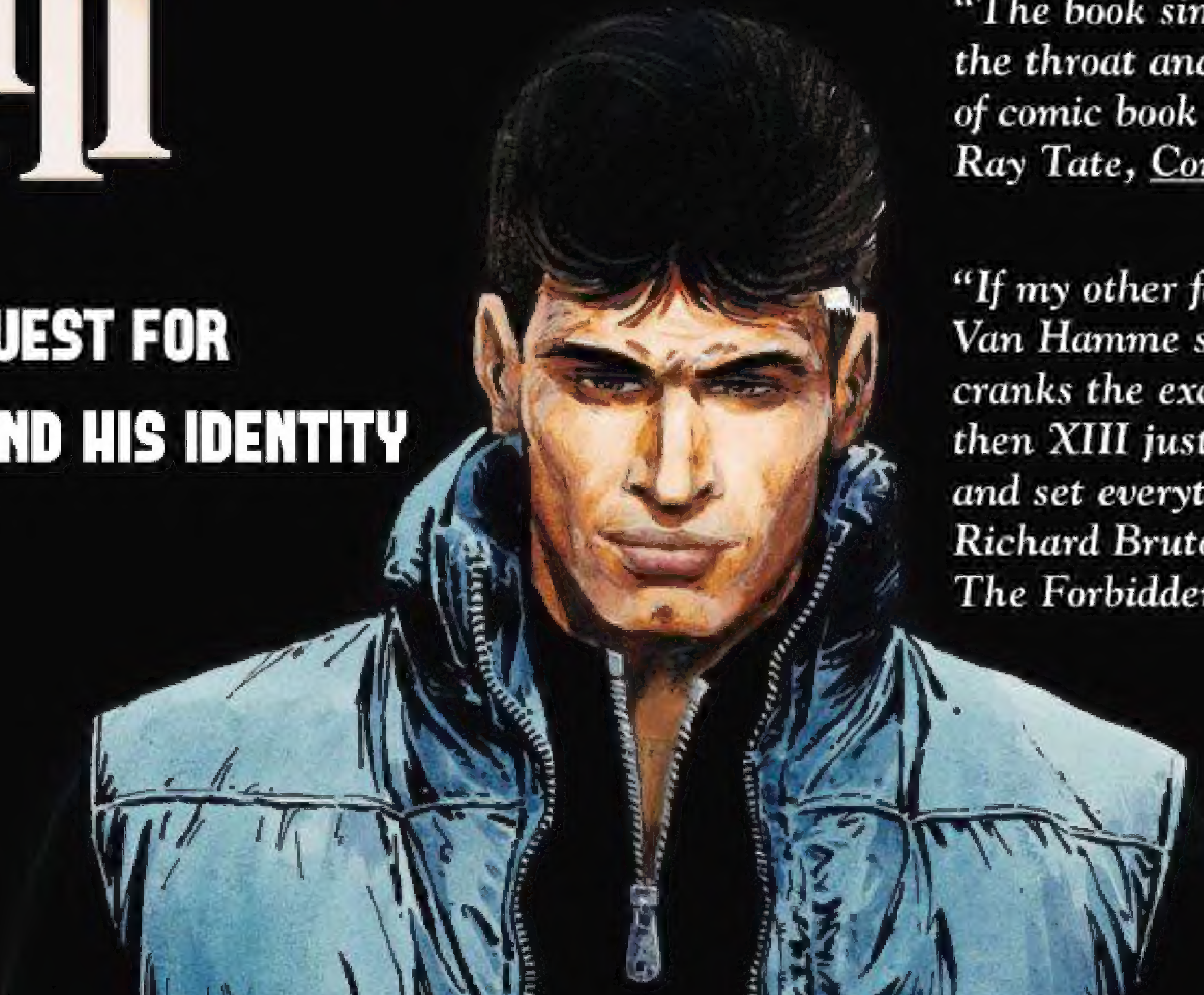

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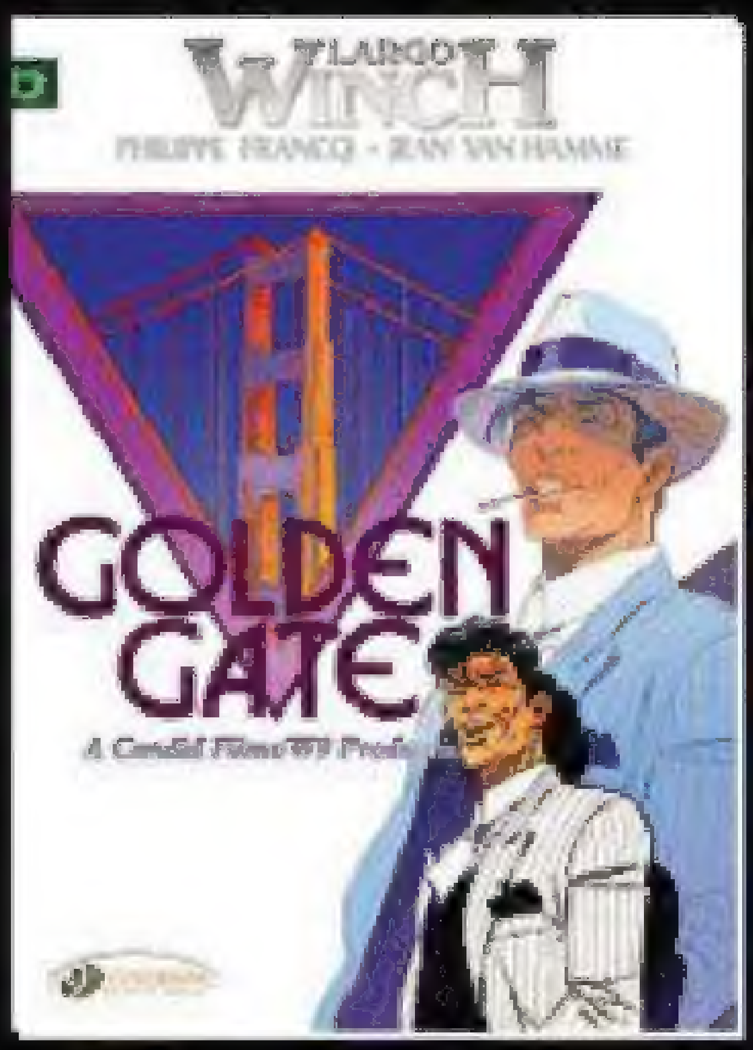
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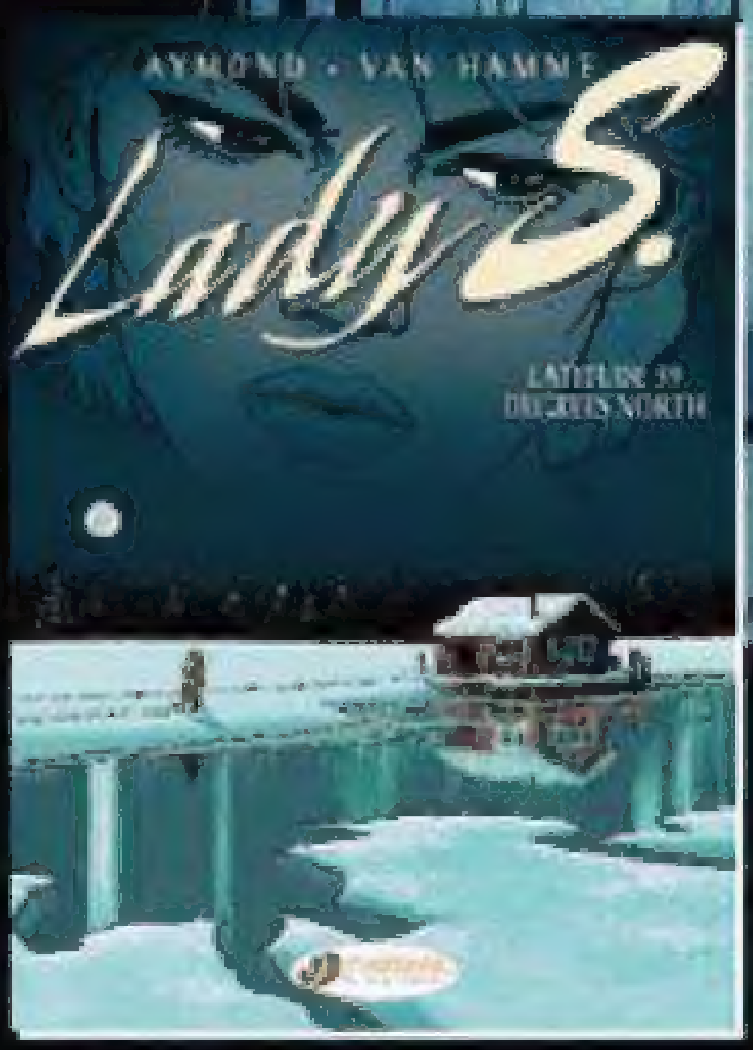
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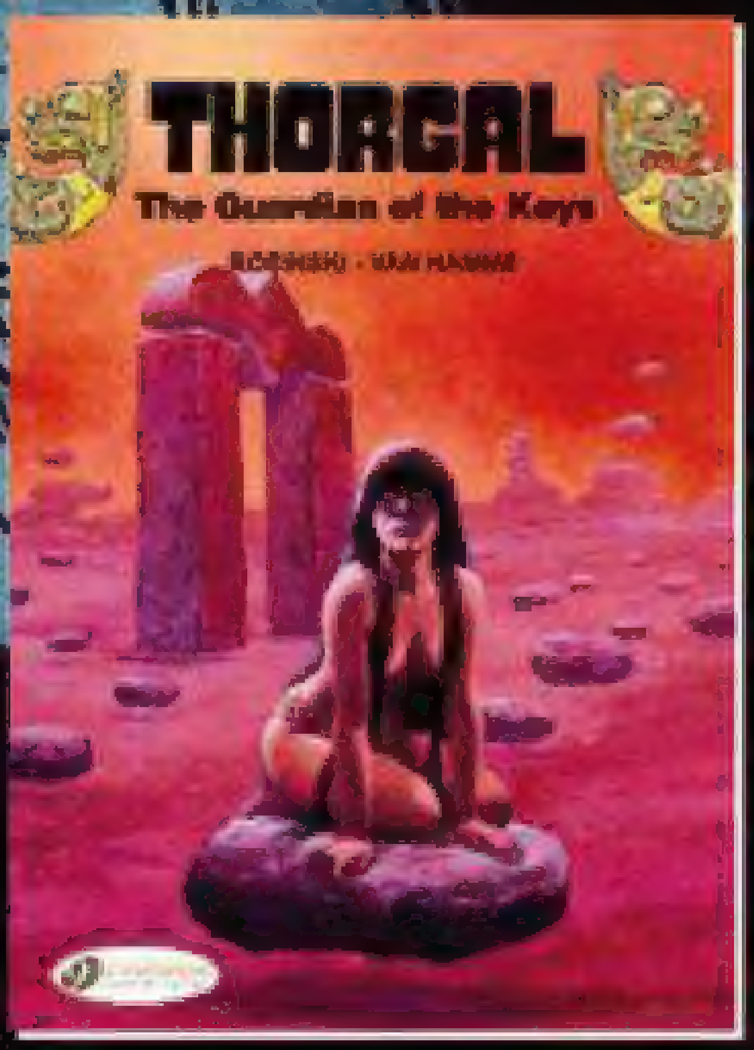
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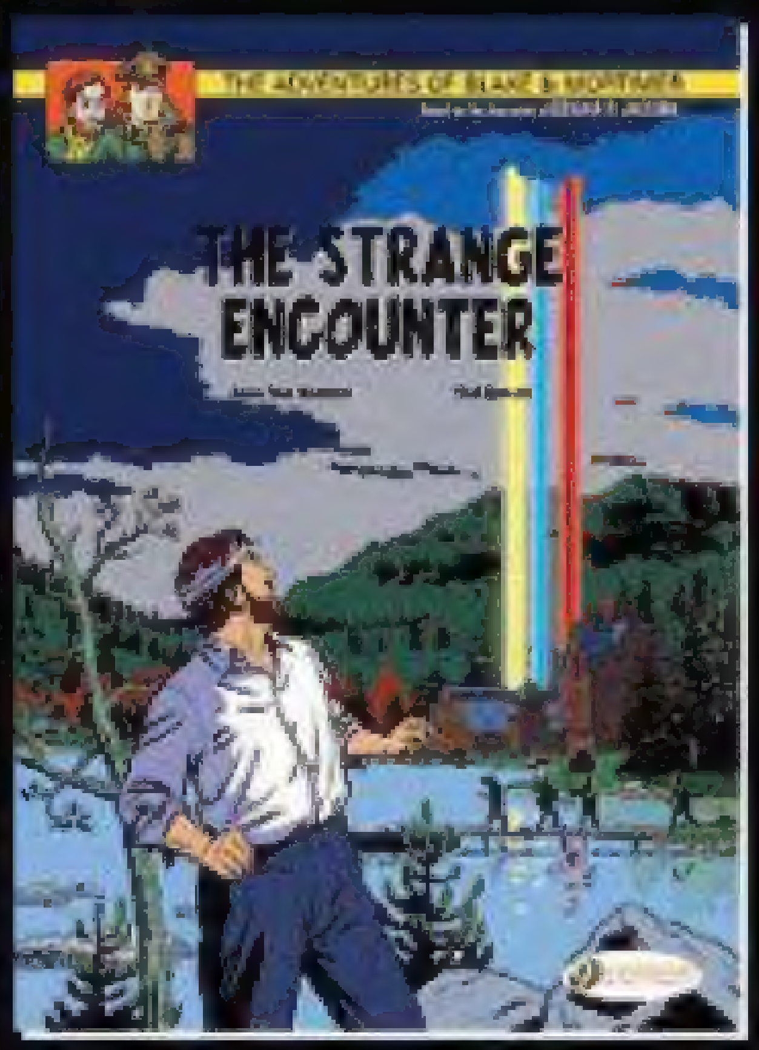
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COMIC HEROES

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Green Lantern wallet/cover images: From *Green Lantern: Secret Origin*, story by Geoff Johns, art by Ivan Reis and Oclair Albert © DC Comics

***Comic Heroes* would like to pledge a secret oath to:** Pamela Mullin, Matt Smith, Olivier Cadic, Chip Mosher, Jim Gibbons, Sophie Calder, Doug Wallace and outgoing *Comic Heroes* publisher Stuart Galbraith. Cheers Stu – we'll miss you!

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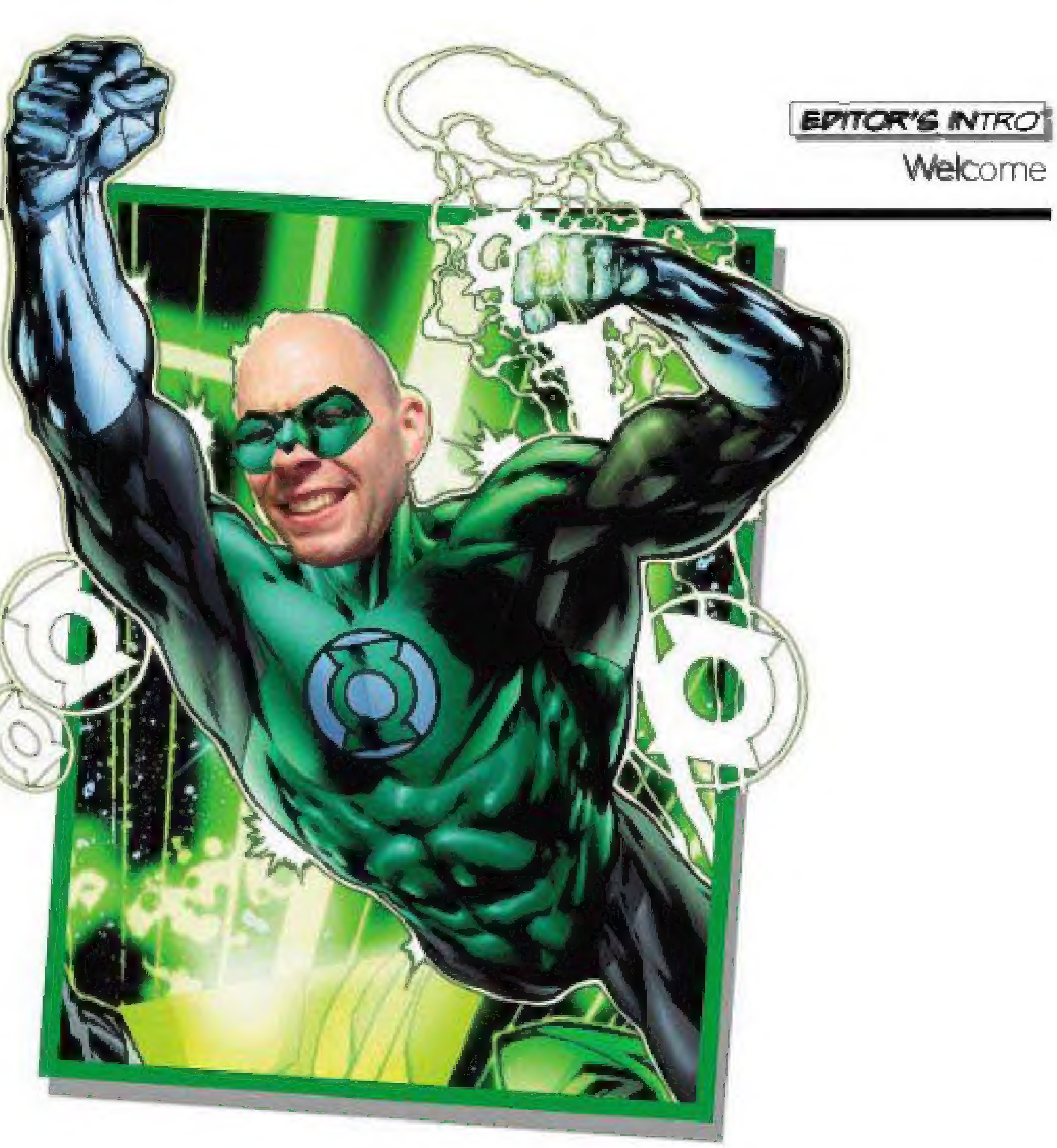
"You'll never get those dwarfs painted."



GOOD TO BE GREEN

Can Martin Campbell do the impossible and finally elevate *Green Lantern* to cinematic greatness?* We're sure if anyone can, it's him – he did a fine job reinvigorating *James Bond twice* with both *GoldenEye* and *Casino Royale* – which is why we've very happily delved deep into the background of one of DC's most enduring heroes in this issue. The celebration starts on page 22.

But it's not all power rings and dead girlfriends in refrigerators**, as the mighty Pat Mills himself charts the history of girls' comics for us, and Paul Gravett gives us a double dose of European fun with a profile of saucy Italian artist Milo Manara and a look inside Belgian blockbuster *XIII*. Mike Molcher then takes us over the pond to rejoice in not 60, not 80, but 70 astonishing years of Archie Comics and romantic equivocation***, and the unsung heroes of the comics world tell us How To Colour Comics on page 96. Frankly, I'm not sure how we managed to pack it all in – but I do hope you enjoy it.

See you next issue!

Jes

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Jes Bickham,
Editor

---

* We have a sneaking suspicion that, before now, special FX technology has simply been unable to sufficiently render a *giant green fist*.

** Yes, this really happened to a Green Lantern – check out page 25 to find out what happened when poor old Kyle Rayner went to the fridge for a Sainsbury's Be Good To Yourself Lasagne.

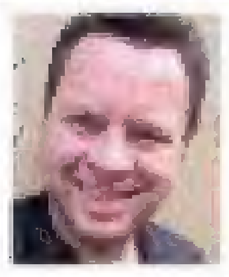
*** Is it going to be Betty or Veronica, Archie? MAKE YOUR MIND UP, MAN!****

**** He finally married *both* in 2009. Wuh? Find out how on p66!

MEET THE TEAM

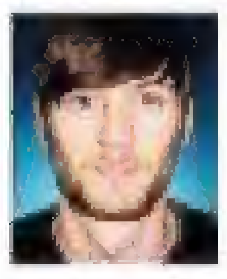
Comic Heroes' Brotherhood of Evil Mutants...

MATT BIELBY



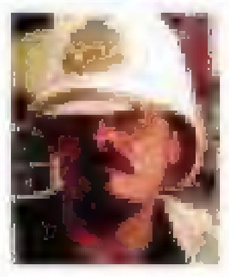
Matt slept with the lights on after reviewing the joyfully icky Eerie Publications book this issue. "Folk were slaughtered and eaten," he says, shivering. "It was almost as nasty as a Rob Liefeld love scene."

ROB POWER



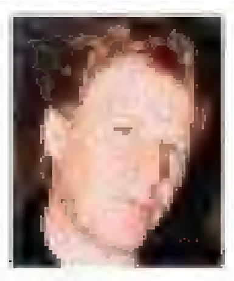
New *Comic Heroes* and *SFX* writer-man Rob is a large, docile mammal who enjoys sugary tea and the works of Alan Moore. He can usually be found under a large pile of new releases, gently humming to himself.

MICHAEL MOLCHER



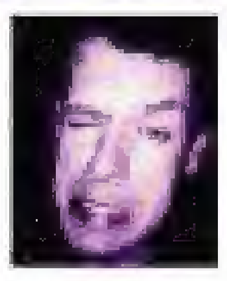
During a recent house move, Michael 'The' Molcher discovered a copy of the comic he wrote and drew when he was a young and impressionable 16-year-old. There are a LOT of boobs in it.

PAT MILLS



Pat Mills needs no introduction – he's the man who created and launched *2000 AD*. He very kindly penned us a feature on the subject of girls' comics this issue. You can read it over on page 42.

DANIEL ETHERINGTON



Mark Millar seems to like disturbingly violent nutjobs, such as Nemesis, which gave Daniel pause when he was assigned the job of interviewing him. To his surprise, he found the Scots comics superstar a jolly genial chap.

STEPHEN JEWELL

Stephen Jewell cut his comic book writing teeth creating the two-issue Epic series *The Olympians* with Australian artist Gary Chaloner in 1991. Since then he has written about comics in *Comics World*, *SFX* and *Comic Heroes*.

FROM THE MAKERS OF SFX MAGAZINE

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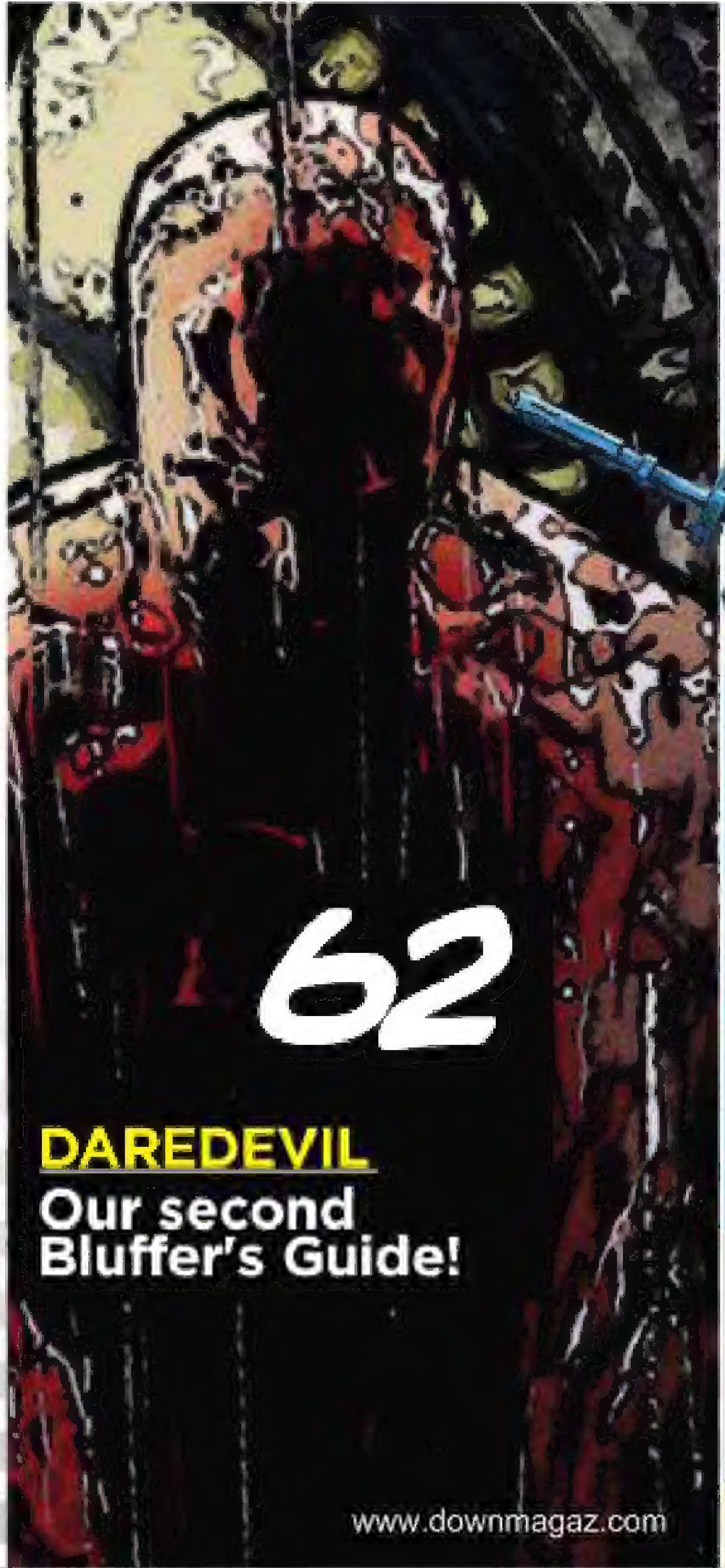

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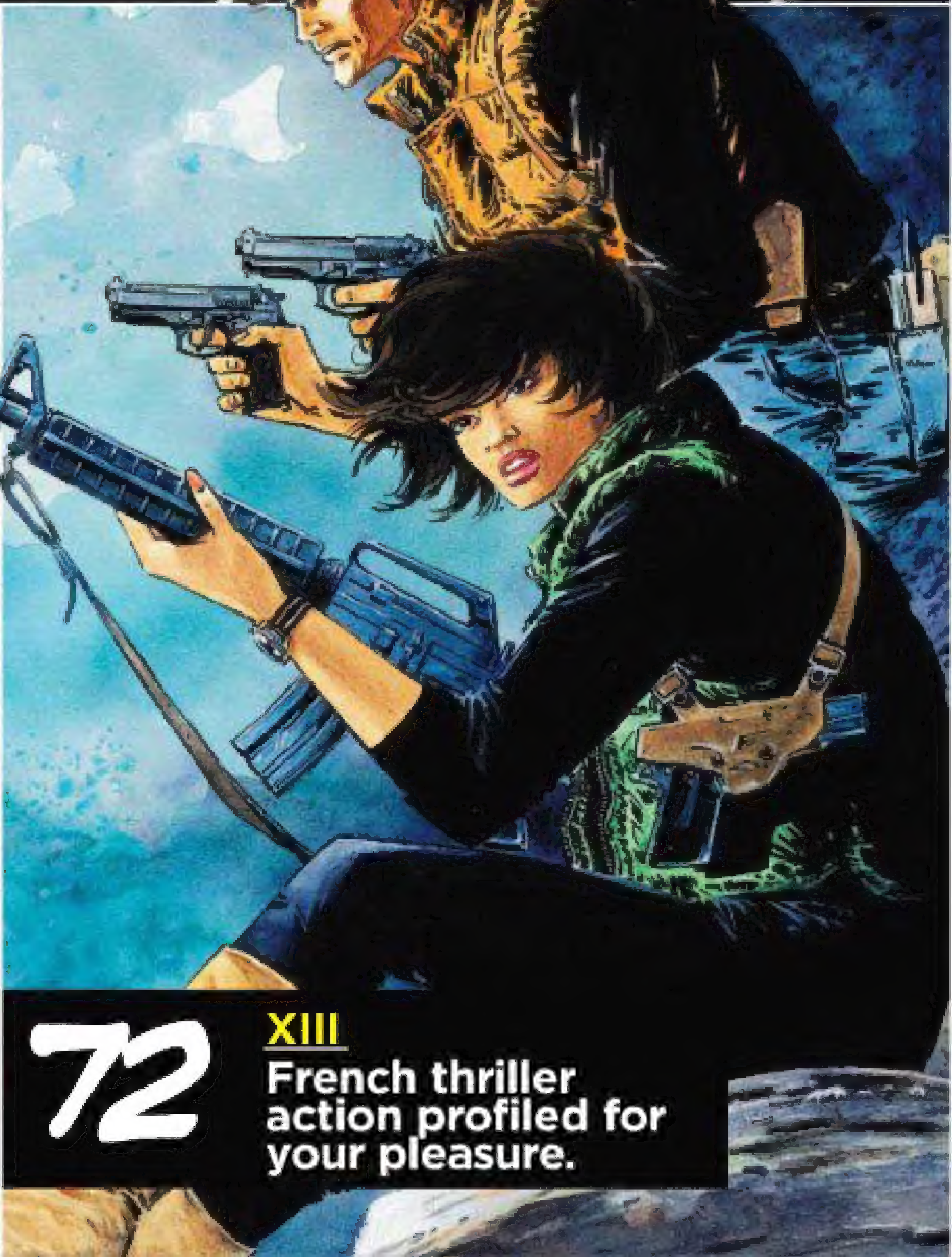

72 XIII
French thriller action profiled for your pleasure.

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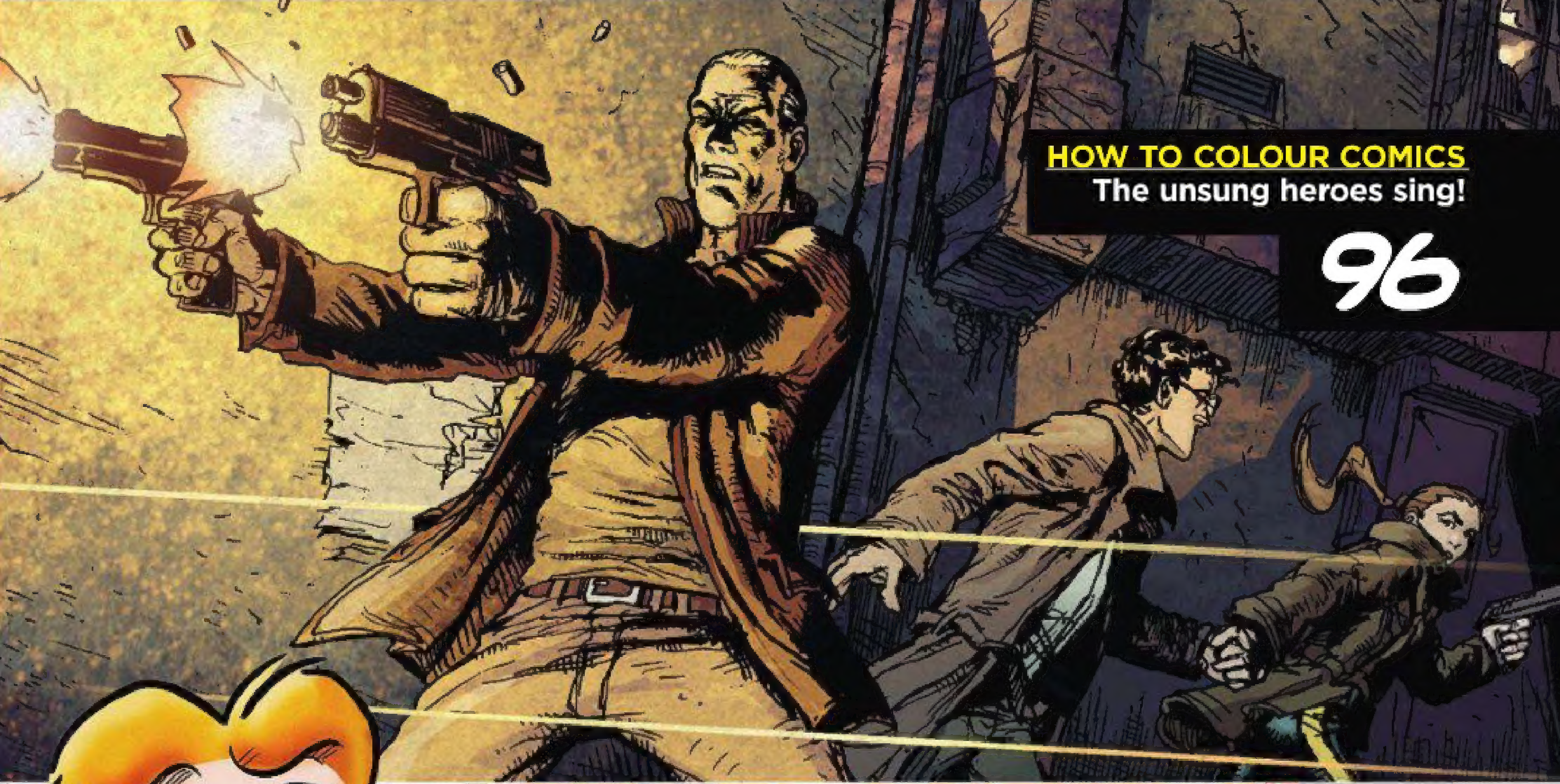

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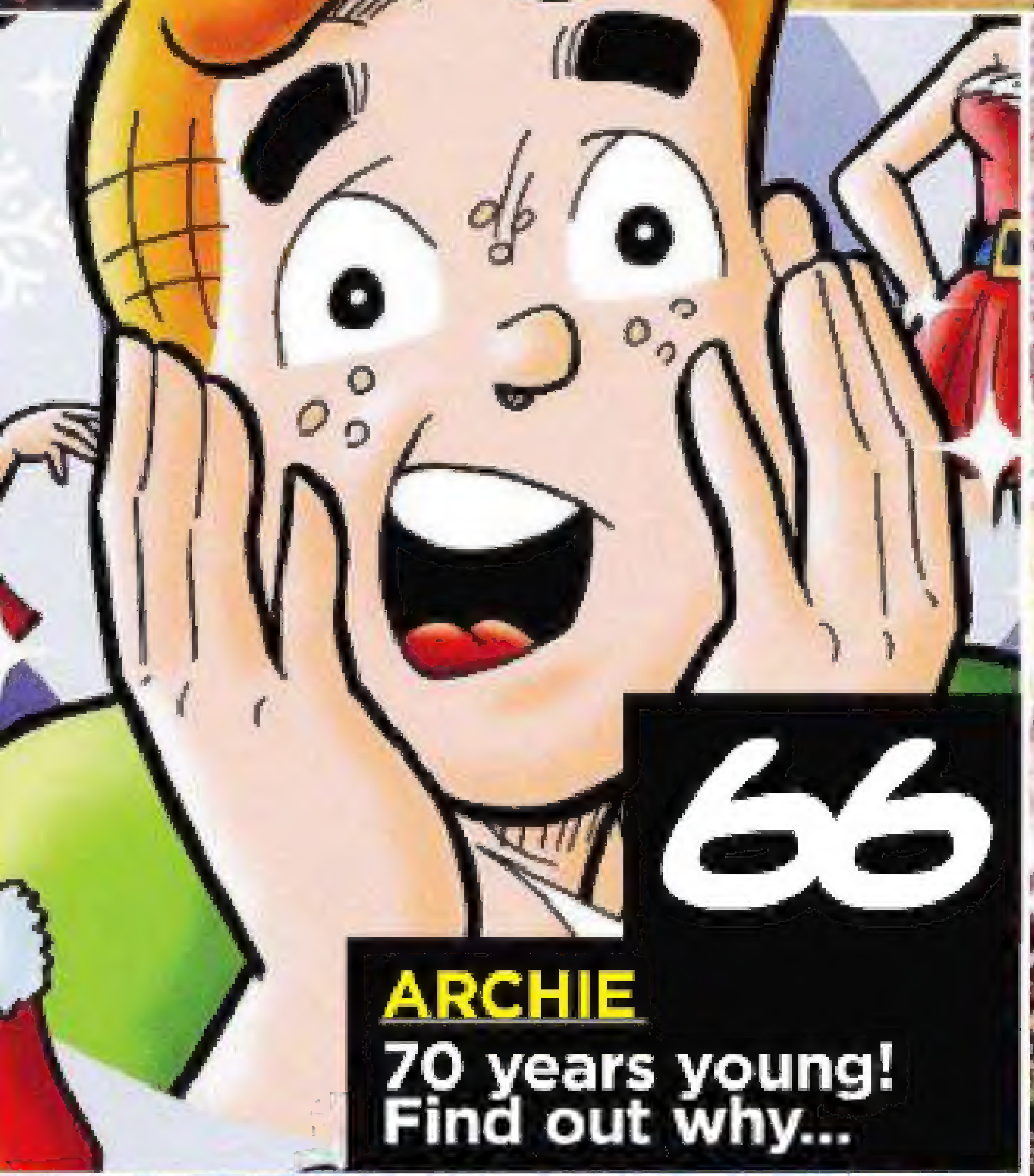

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MARVEL EVENT

Get Ready For Fear Itself

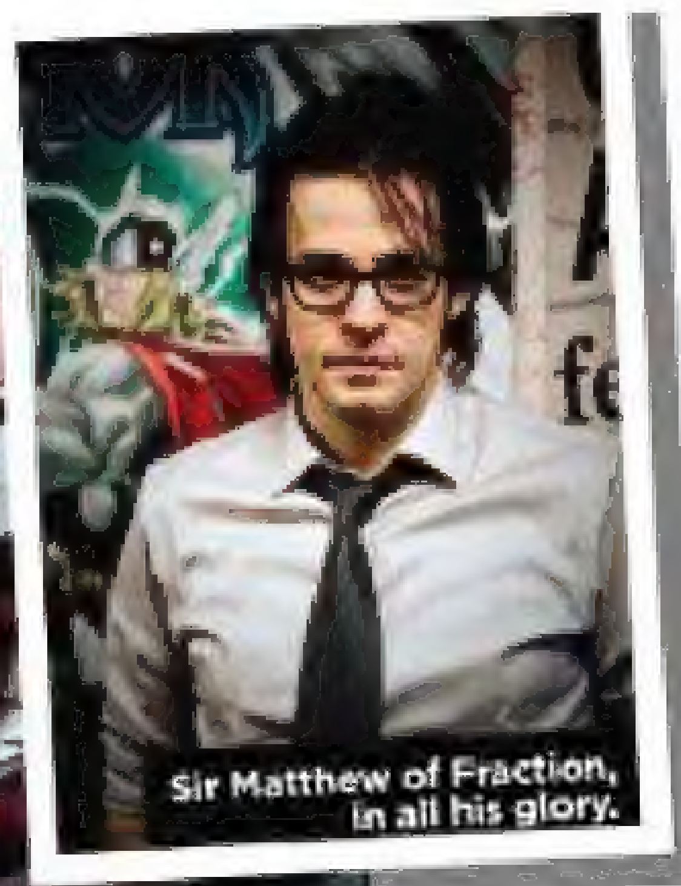
As Marvel gears up for its big 2011 event, **Stephen Jewell** talks to the series' architect, the inimitable **Matt Fraction**...

With Thor and Captain America both due to arrive in cinemas this summer, it was a natural move for Marvel Comics to base this year's blockbuster event, *Fear Itself*, around the two founding Avengers.

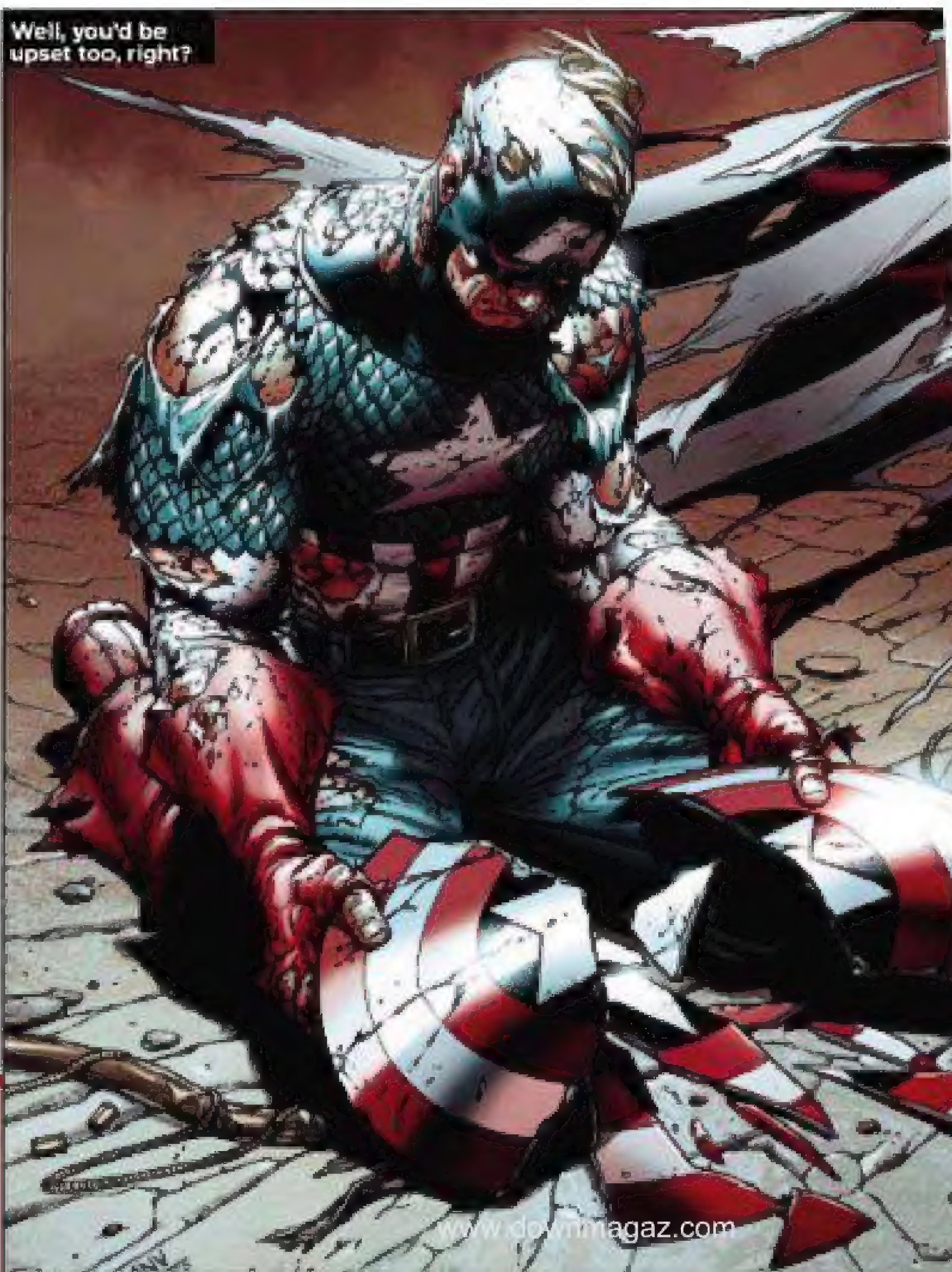
Written by Matt Fraction (*Uncanny X-Men*, *Invincible Iron Man*) and illustrated by *New Avengers*' Stuart Immonen, the seven-issue mini-series pits the Sentinel of Liberty and Goldilocks against their worse nightmares in the form of the Red Skull's demented daughter Sin, and Serpent, the Norse god of Fear. And while the overarching story will reach all corners of the Marvel Universe, the Portland-based scribe promises that it will be self-contained and easy to read.

"The thing about the story is that it's really simple," he tells *Comic Heroes*. "It's not a DC crossover, you don't have to read 780,000 books to get the whole thing. There's an elegant through-line that speaks to everything that makes these Marvel characters such great modern-day myths. If we're being coy and holding back in the lead-up to the release, I promise more will be revealed as we get there. By design, it's meant to be an all-inclusive, hop-on-board book. If you read any number of the tie-ins, you'll get a bigger, richer story, but I promise that you'll get a beginning, middle and end with *Fear Itself*."

Fraction pens Thor's monthly adventures, but *Fear Itself* is his first opportunity to explore the character of the original Captain America. "I've written Bucky a little bit, but I've never really had the chance to write Steve Rogers," he says, confirming that Steve Rogers will soon return to the role of Captain America in place of his former sidekick, who's currently on trial for crimes allegedly committed when he was the Soviet-controlled assassin Winter Soldier. "He's dealing with his own catastrophes in *Captain America*. It's a time when we have



Sir Matthew of Fraction, in all his glory.



Well, you'd be upset too, right?

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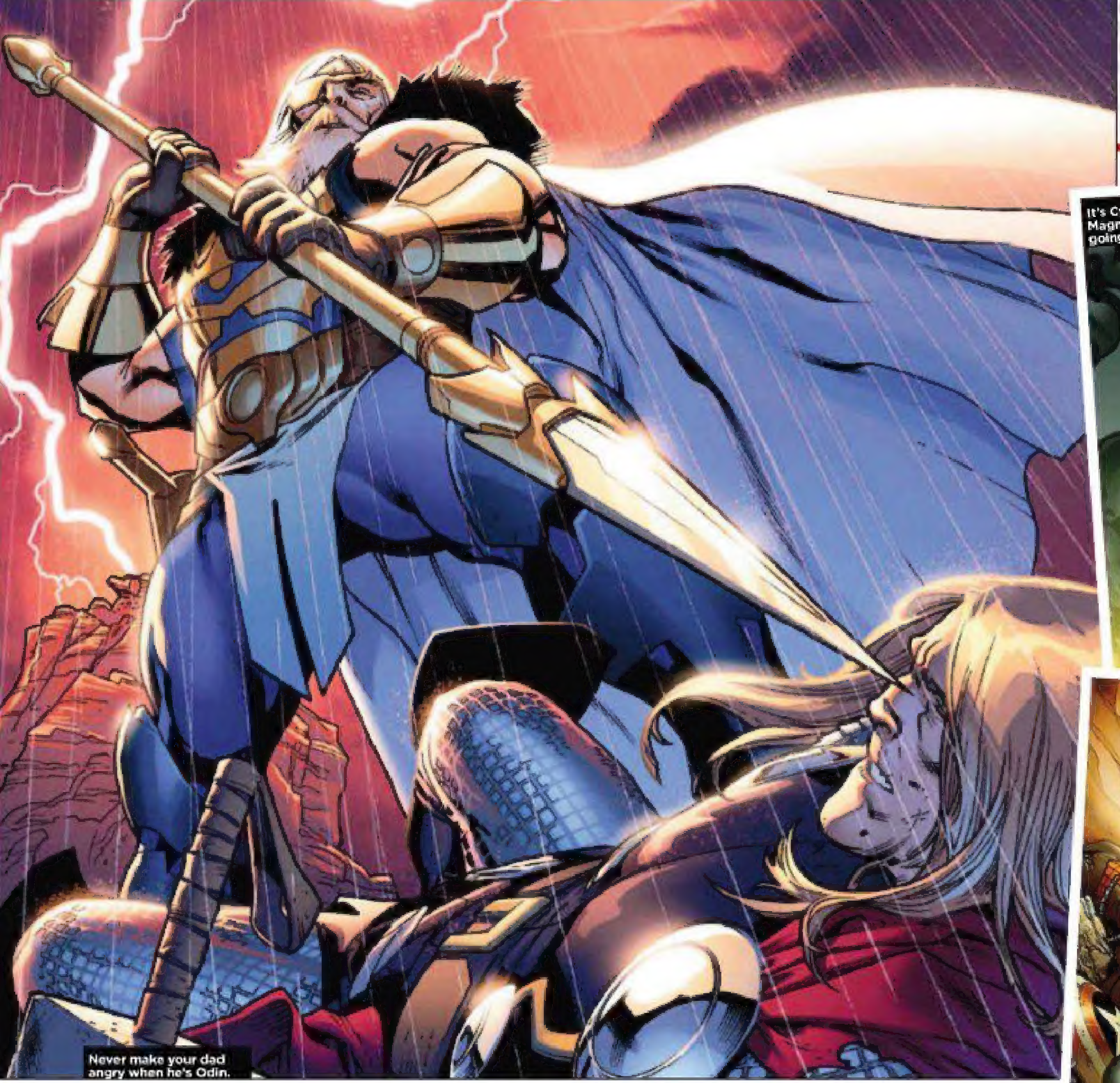
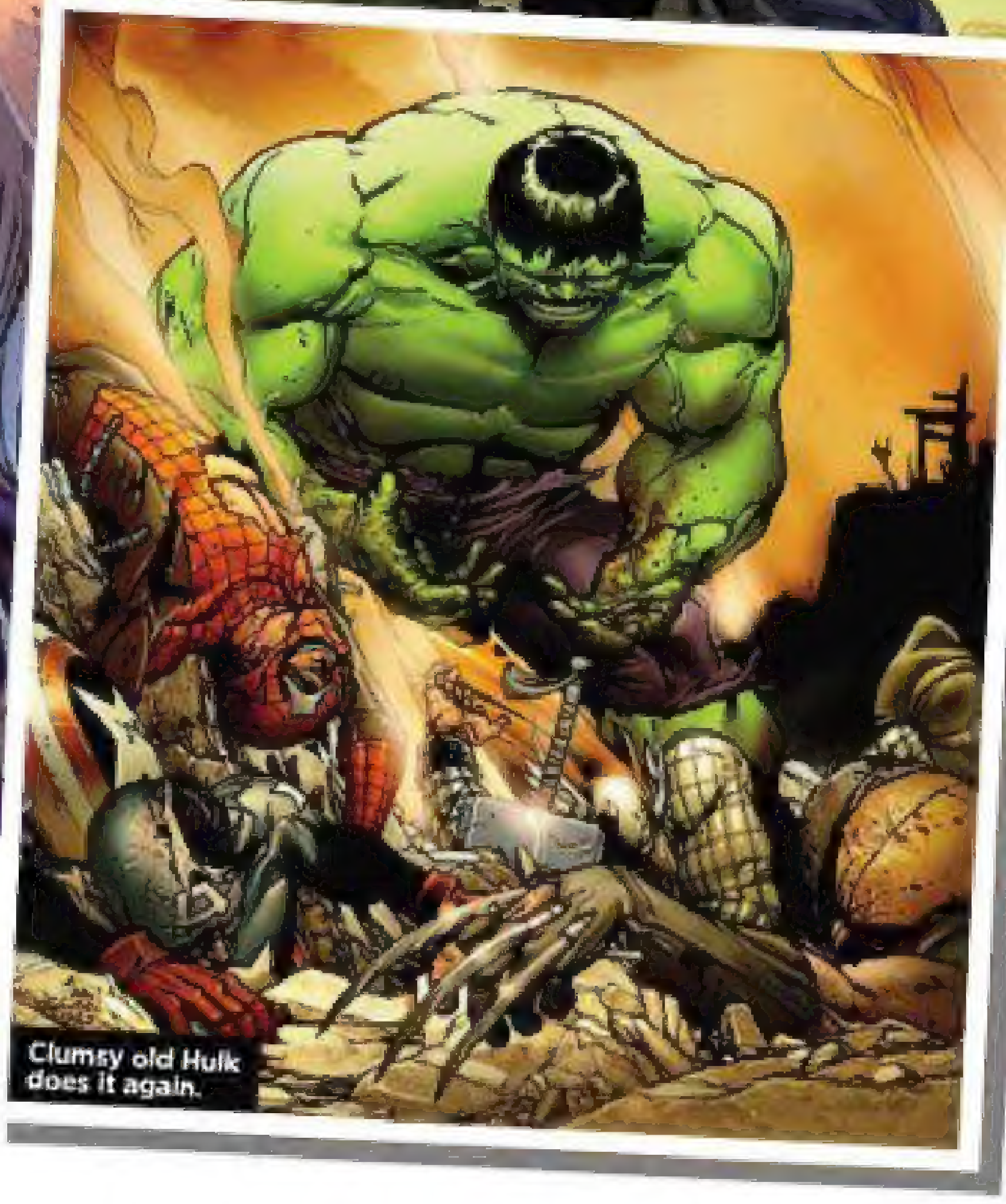


Never make your dad angry when he's Odin.

It's Cyclops! It's Magneto! What's going on?



Clumsy old Hulk does it again.

never needed Captain America more but there's no Captain America to be had. It's a crippling thing that he's dealing with emotionally, so when the action starts he's already compromised."

Before *Fear Itself* launches in April, it will be preceded by a special prologue scripted by resident *Captain America* writer Ed Brubaker. "It's a great chance for Ed to mix things up a bit," says Fraction, who is enjoying working with Stuart Immonen, an artist familiar with tackling big casts after illustrating Brian Bendis's *New Avengers*. "This is even beyond what he's doing on that book. It's the best work of his career; it's really stunning."

> "AS ITS TITLE SUGGESTS, FEAR ITSELF EXPLORES THE VERY CONCEPT OF FEAR"

ODIN'S FEAR

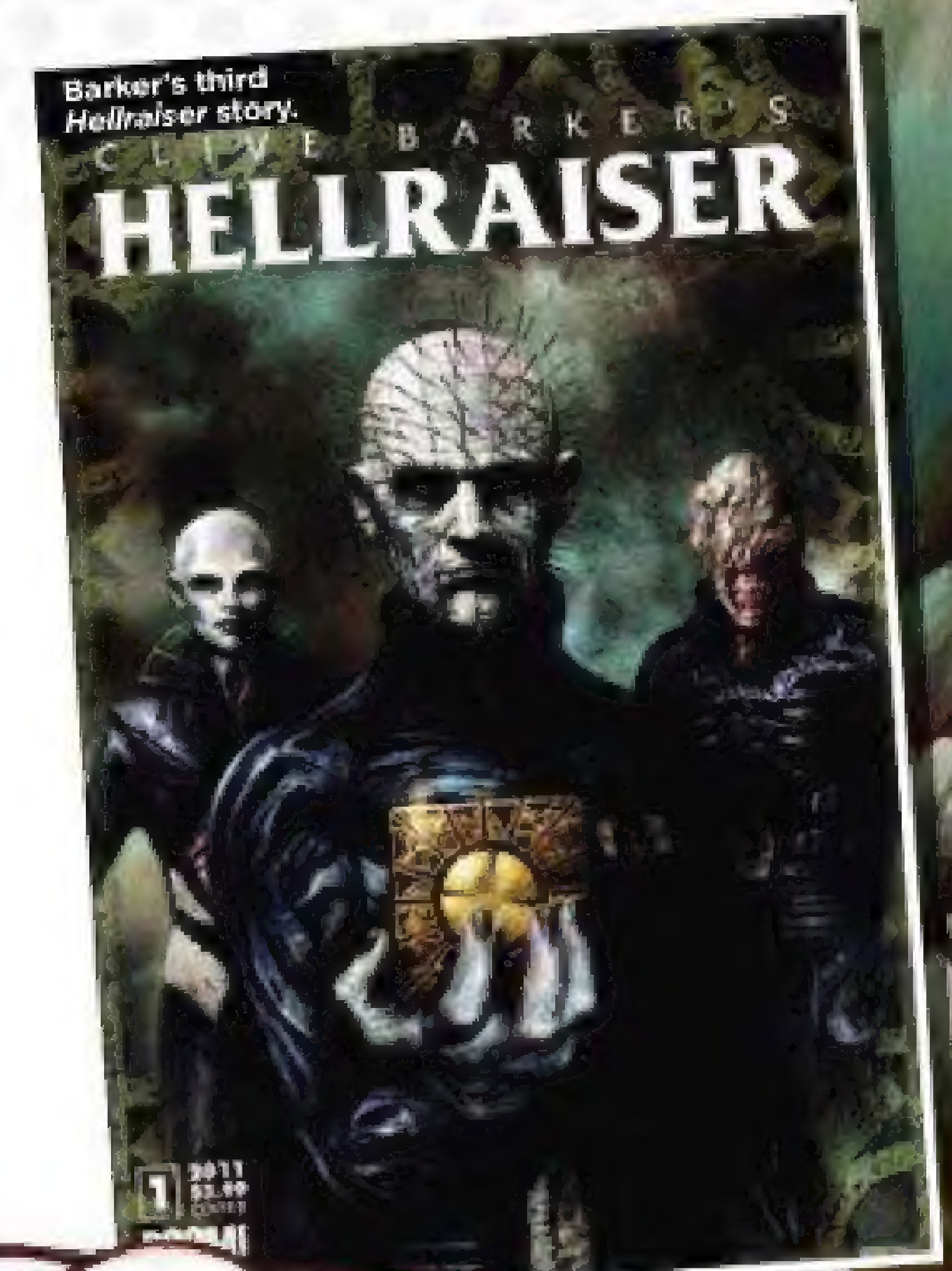
According to Fraction, Thor's classic mythology links the Thunder God with Captain America's World War 2 roots. "Hitler had a fascination with all things Norse, and the idea is that Sin is going to become a better Red Skull than her father ever was," he explains. "Meanwhile, Thor has to deal with this entity, this guardian presence that has not just been hidden, but deliberately erased from all collective memory. So they're both dealing with these tidal shifts in the way they understand the world to be."

Despite being a brand new creation, Serpent's dense backstory paints him as an established character, who has been around since the dawn of time. "As a fan, there's always that feeling, 'You're ret-conning again, you're adding things that weren't there before', but that's what we do every month," he says. "We've built that into this guy's story, which is that Odin's original sin was to banish him to a prison, scatter all of his worshippers and destroy all of his temples. Odin basically removed his name from the history books and Odin is the only one that remembers him. He's been erased from the collective memories and experiences of Asgard and there's a hidden history of Asgard that Odin has scrubbed out to get things the way they are now. How the West was won was not a pretty story and Thor has to deal with that."

Odin recently returned from the dead in *Thor* #618. "I wanted him back because I missed the old Odin of yore and the tempestuous and faux Shakespeare in all of Thor's familial politics," laughs Fraction. "I love that *MacBeth/King Lear* kind of aspect to Thor's family life. I knew I was bringing Loki back as a child and once Odin was also back, this story of *Fear Itself* just occurred. It speaks to all the many different layers of Thor and Odin's father/son relationship and the way they both like to run the show. It's also true to the history of the book and to Norse mythology itself. It gives a familial gravity to Thor's home life, which the book thrives on."

As its title suggests, *Fear Itself* explores the very concept of fear. "The one common link that all the Marvel heroes have is that there's this shock of fear running through all of their origins," says Fraction. "Ultimately, in these stories that we tell every month, a bad guy does something awful and then a good guy feels fear before eventually overcoming it and winning. That's our tempo in a lot of ways, on a very simplistic level. But the idea gave us something we could exploit. 'At the darkest moments, what scares you when you're alone in the dark with your thoughts? What really frightens you?' It's a great thing to put these characters up against, and a great hero moment comes out of that." CH

■ *Fear Itself* starts shaking up the Marvel Universe this April.



Barker's third *Hellraiser* story.

MUST-READ!

New comics!

Like a human sieve, **James Hunt** sifts through all the forthcoming releases, so you don't have to...

Carlos Pacheco's *Uncanny* cover.

Spidey's arch foe has a new guise...

Unsure which big releases to buy? Wish you knew in advance what titles will be on everyone's lips? Don't worry, help is at hand courtesy of *Comic Heroes*' regular look at the must-read releases that are hitting comic shop shelves over the next two months!

MARVEL

In March, Marvel launches *Fear Itself*, the company's first line-wide crossover since *Secret Invasion*. The action starts in the *Fear Itself: Prologue*, leading into April's *Fear Itself* #1, courtesy of Matt Fraction and Stuart Immonen. What's it about? It's too early to say – but expect Sin, daughter of the Red Skull, to play an important part.

Speaking of which, with a movie on the horizon, Captain America fans are well-catered for. March's *Captain America* #615.1 provides a jumping-on point, before *Captain America* #616 (a 104-page 70th anniversary spectacular) concludes 'The Trial Of Captain America' – and there are a further seven Cap-related one-shots on shelves in March and April.

Marvel hasn't forgotten its other movie star, either. In March, *Thor* #620.1 teams up cosmic masters Dan Abnett and Andy Lanning for a one-off story, then in April, Matt Fraction launches *The Mighty Thor*, a new ongoing series with *Siege* artist Olivier Coipel. Meanwhile, Kieron Gillen returns to the franchise with the newly renamed *Journey Into Mystery* #622.

If you're more interested in web-slinging than shield-throwing or hammer-wielding, look no further than *Ultimate Spider-Man* #156, which sees Mark Bagley returning to illustrate the 'Death Of Spider-Man'. Meanwhile *Venom* #1, debuts Spidey's arch-nemesis' latest incarnation as an agent of the US military – but who's inside the black suit? Pick it up to find out!

The Fantastic Four might be no more, but March's *FF* #1 by Jonathan Hickman and Steve Epting promises new members, old friends and older enemies for Marvel's First Family as they deal with their recent tragedy.

The point-one initiative continues to provide jumping-on issues in March and April, with *Hulk* #30.1, *Deadpool* #32.1, *Avengers* #12.1 and *Secret Avengers* 12.1 on shelves – but *Uncanny X-Men* #534.1 is the one to watch, because guest artist Carlos Pacheco joins Kieron Gillen (debuting as the series' sole writer) to deal with the elephant in the

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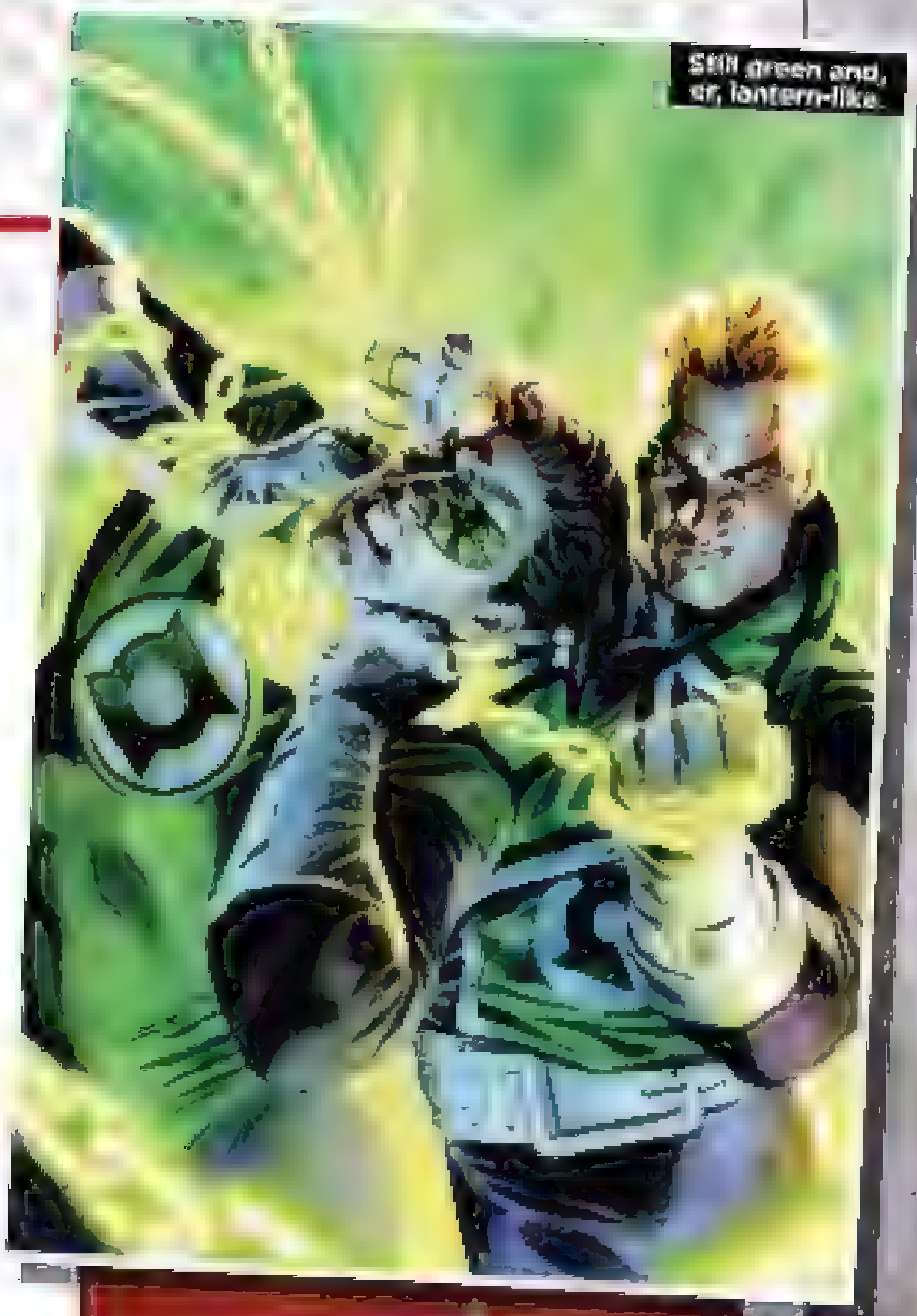
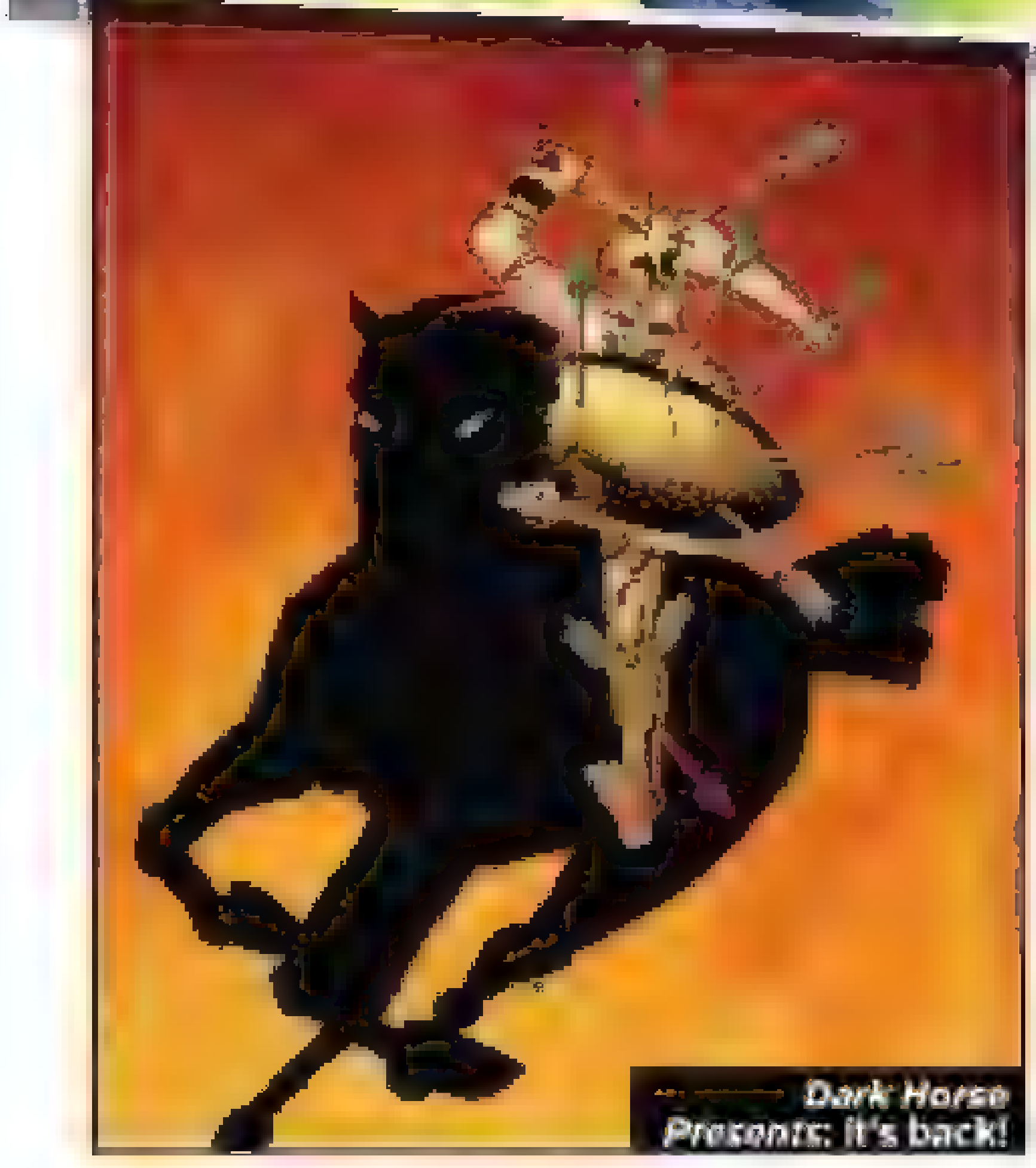
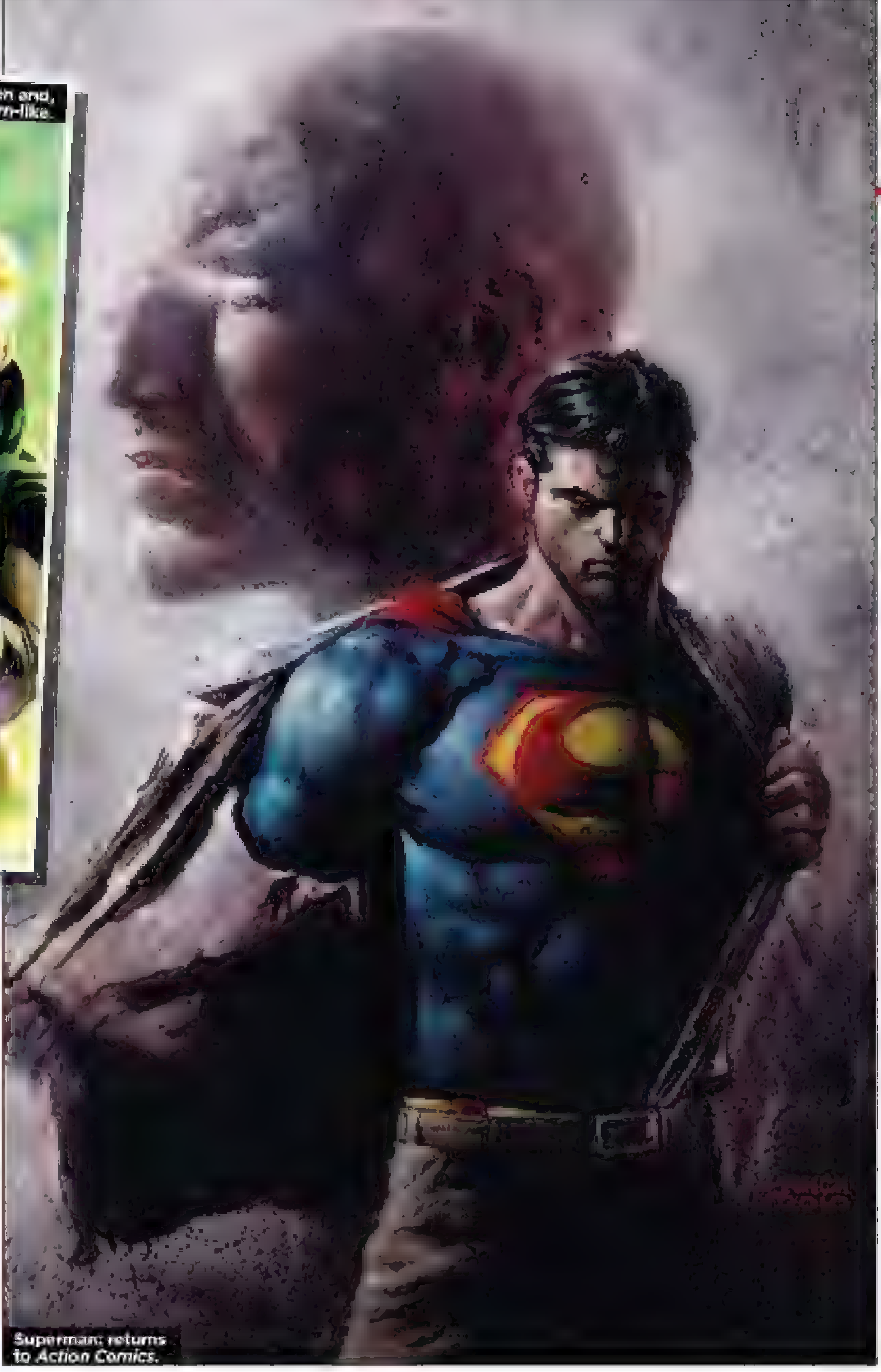


Still green and, er, lantern-like.

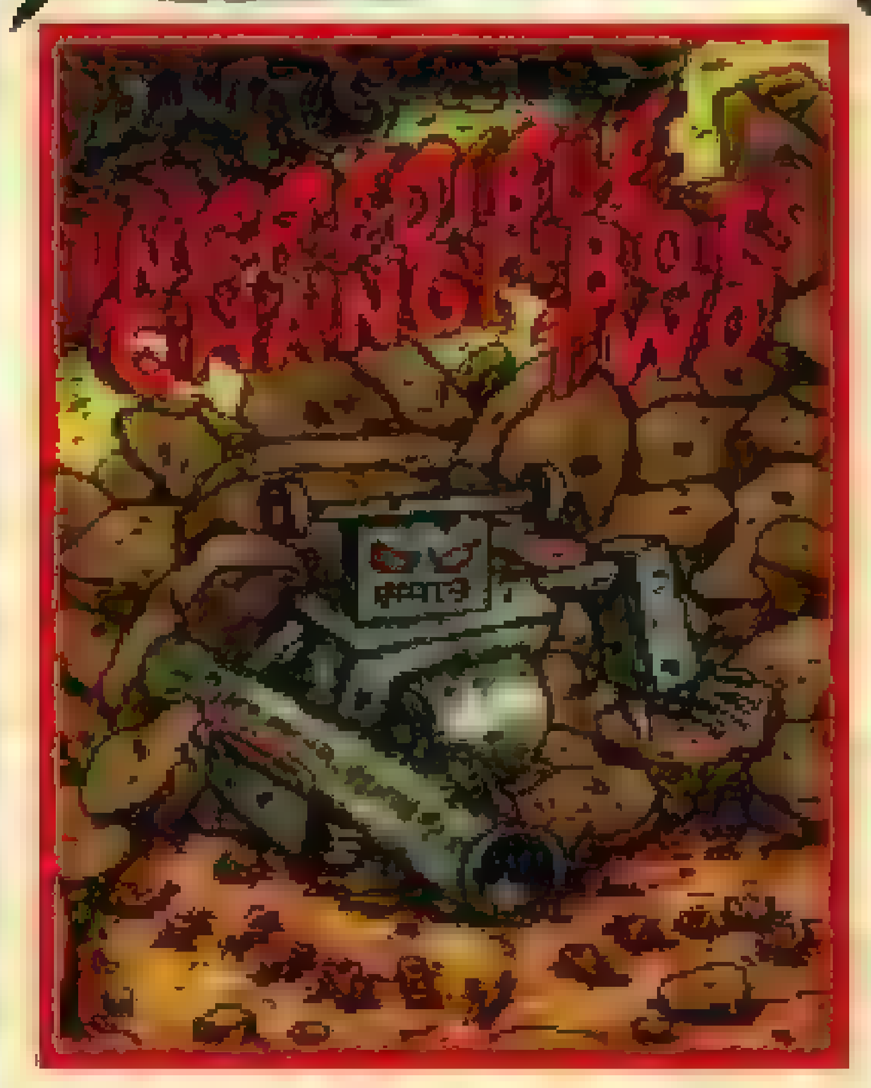


Dark Horse Presents: it's back!



Superman: returns to Action Comics.

INDIE SPOTLIGHT



INCREDIBLE CHANGE-BOTS TWO

The second, stand-alone volume of Jeffrey Brown's *Transformers* parody brings back Shootertron and the rest of the Change-Bots for another dose of idiosyncratic action that falls somewhere between homage and satire. 140 pages, presented in full colour for $14.95, the previous *Change-Bots* volume showcased Brown's unique gift for merging the banal and fantastic. Volume 2 is a must-read for anyone who ever touched a transforming robot toy growing up.

room – namely, how does San Francisco feel about having Magneto live next door?

Lastly, we couldn't let this pass without mentioning that in March, Marvel brings back the CrossGen characters with the start of two new mini-series – read about time-spanning fantasy-adventure in *Sigil* #1 (Mike Carey and Leonard Kirk) and Victorian detective intrigue in *Ruse* #1 (Mark Waid and Mirco Pierfederici).

DC

DC is pushing its own movie star this spring, as the Green Lantern franchise dominates the shelves yet again. In March, Geoff Johns kicks off the 'War Of The Green Lanterns' crossover in *Green Lantern* #64, after which the story continues into *Green Lantern Corps* #58, then into *Green Lantern: Emerald Warriors* #8. In April, all eyes should be focused on *Brightest Day* #23 and #24, the conclusion to DC's latest year-long epic as the fallout from last year's *Blackest Night* crossover finally settles.

If you're looking for DC's next big thing, though, you could do worse than buy *The Flash* #12 in April, in which Geoff Johns and Frances Manapul begin the march towards 'Flashpoint', a line-wide event coming soon from DC.

Superman fans would be mad to miss April's *Action Comics* #900, which teams current scribe Paul Cornell up with Richard Donner (director of *Superman*), David Goyer (screenwriter of *The Dark Knight*) and Damon Lindelof (co-creator of *Lost*) for a 100-page extravaganza propelling the series into its own big summer storyline. Anyone who hasn't been reading *Action Comics* recently should also look out for *Jimmy Olsen* #1 in March, which collects Nick Spencer's critically acclaimed backup stories into a single 80-page volume.

In the Bat-verse, *Knight & Squire* #6 sees Paul Cornell and Jimmy Broxton conclude their tale of DC's British superheroes and villains, as the Joker turns his attentions towards ol' Blighty, while *Batman Inc* #5 continues the theme as Grant Morrison returns home to write Britain's "other" *Batman*, *The Hood*. Then, in April, the newly rescheduled *Batwoman* #1 gives you a chance to see the fantastic artwork of JH Williams III as Kate Kane finally arrives in her own long-awaited ongoing series.

INDEPENDENTS

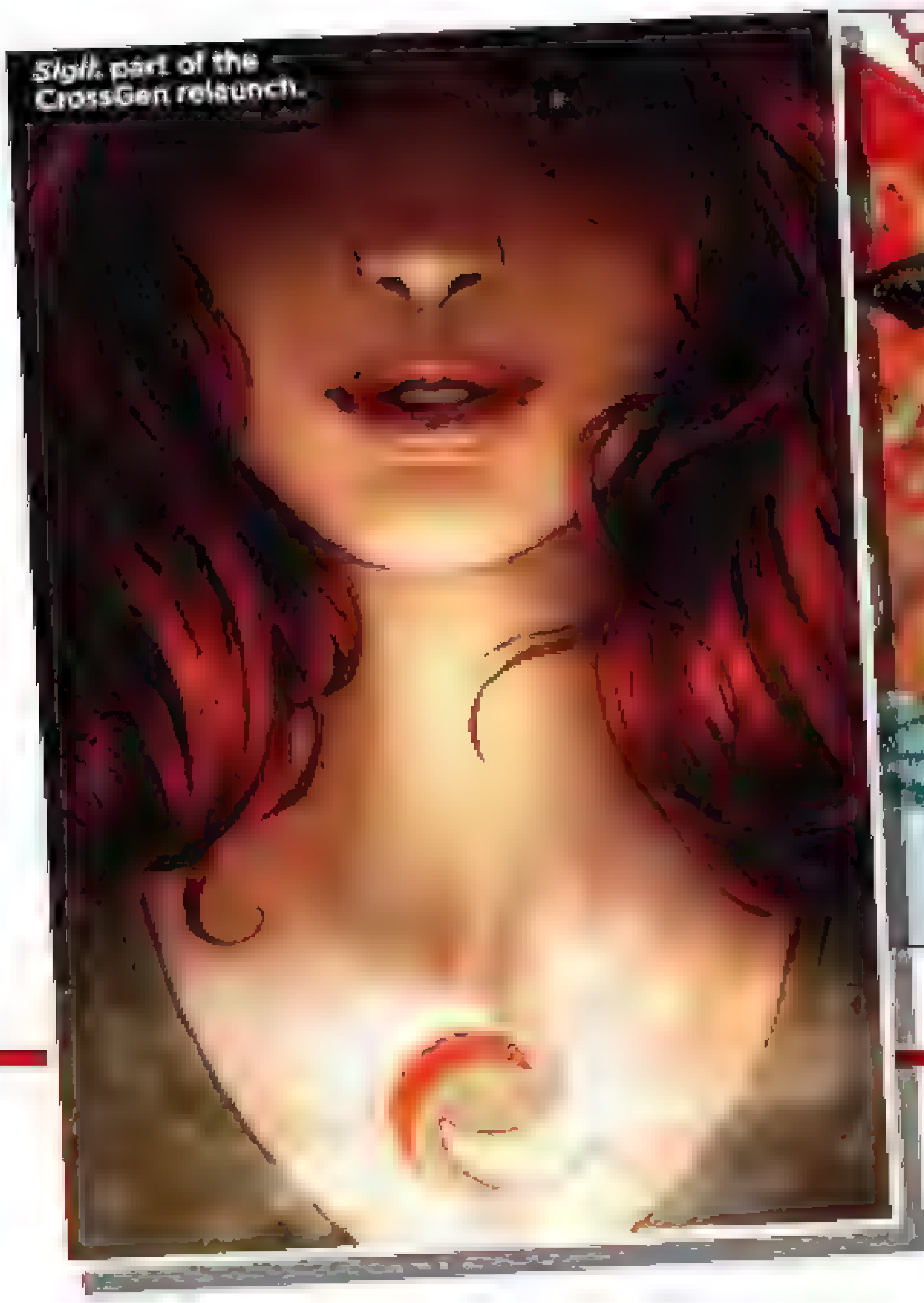
Outside the big two, there's still plenty to look forward to in March. Clive Barker teams up with Boom! Studios for *Hellraiser* #1, only the third time Barker himself has told a *Hellraiser* story, and one that promises to explore the Cenobites in a way they've never been before (with a ten-page backup by Larry '*The Matrix*' Wachowski!)

And if you like the idea of new stories based on old movies, then look no further than *Godzilla: Monster World* #1, which sees the King of the Monsters return to comics – along with a host of other Toho greats. It's certain to satisfy all of your Mothra/King Ghidorah/Rodan needs.

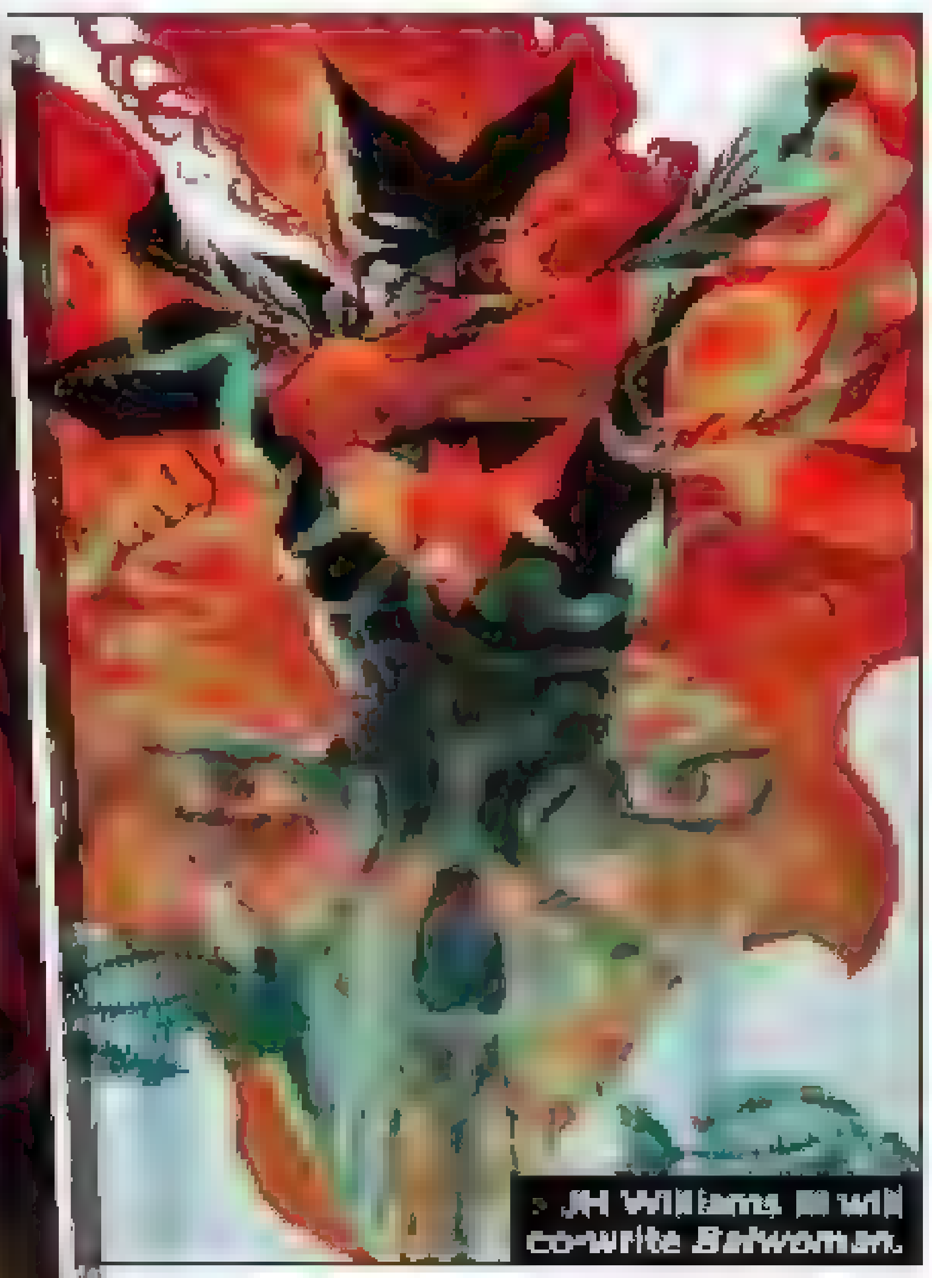
Image Comics gives readers a unique chance to jump onto last year's breakout hit *Chew*, when *Chew* #27 is published nine issues early, out of sequence, confusing new and old readers alike!

In April, Dark Horse brings back its classic anthology with *Dark Horse Presents* #1, an 80-page book that gives readers their first look at Frank Miller's *300* prequel, *Xerxes*. There's also a prose story from science fiction giant Harlan Ellison, and comics from Howard Chaykin, Neal Adams and more, all sure to be worth a look.

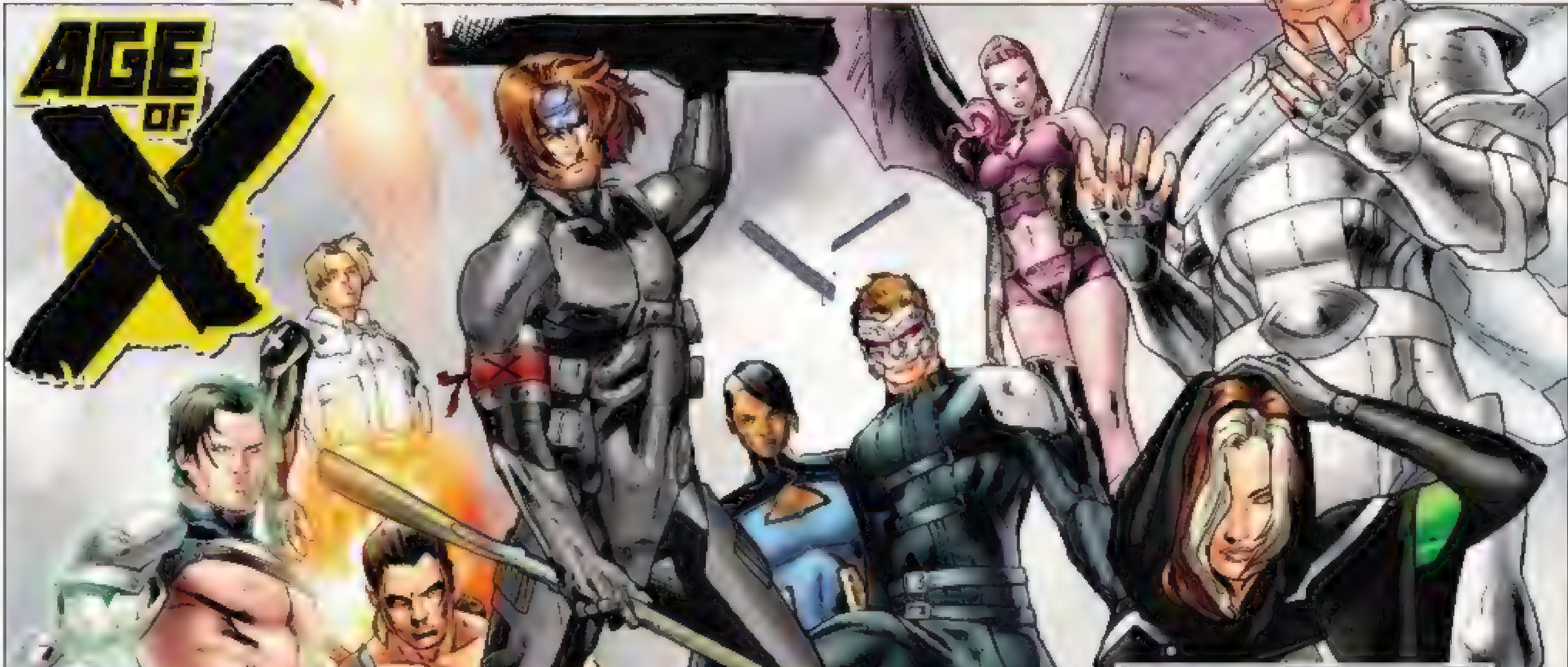
Finally, market speculators will want a slice of Bluewater's *The Royals: Prince William And Kate Middleton*, which commemorates the wedding you won't be able to get away from in April and is guaranteed to sell for about eight times its cover price on eBay (probably). Just don't hang onto it beyond 29 April. CH



Sigil: part of the CrossGen relaunch.



JH Williams III will co-write Batwoman.



HEROES IN GAMES

Destination: X-citement

X-Men writer Mike Carey.

X-MEN DESTINY

Familiar mutants will appear.

Mike Carey takes the X-Men on an adventure into the world of videogames. By **Stephen Jewell**

After guiding the comic book adventures of the X-Men for the past five years, Mike Carey is taking the merry mutants into a different medium as the writer of Silicon Knights's X-Men: Destiny videogame, which is due for release through Activision later this year.

"It's a very different kind of storytelling that was fascinating to do," he tells *Comic Heroes*. "You're setting up alternate narrative lines through the same sequence of events so lots of mutually exclusive things can happen. It's like telling several alternate universe stories side by side."

While *X-Men: Destiny* should be available on the latest consoles, the north London-based author admits that he is strictly old school when it comes to videogames. "My favourite is *Sonic The Hedgehog* and we still have a Sega Mega Drive that we dig out every now and then," laughs Carey, who doesn't believe that his old fashioned tastes are a disadvantage. "I've approached it as just another *X-Men* story and worked out the sort of beats that I wanted as if I was writing it as a comic. When you're brought in as a freelancer, you're not scripting gameplay so much as a story. Whereas in a comic you work with an artist and an editor, with a game you're working with designers who flesh out the properties, characters and settings you're defining and build gameplay into the skeleton of the story that you're constructing."

"THERE'S A MYSTERY, WHICH IS PARTLY TIED IN WITH THE ENDING, AROUND WHAT MADE THIS REALITY BRANCH OFF"

Set in a dystopian world where there are no X-Men, Carey's *Age of X* crossover launched last month with *The Age of X Alpha* one-shot and continues for the next few months in the pages of *X-Men Legacy* and *New Mutants*. While it harks back to Chris Claremont and John Byrne's classic 'Days of Future Past' and other time-bending tales like 'Age Of Apocalypse,' Carey insists that it's not an Elseworlds-esque alternate storyline as it links subtly into ongoing *X-Men* continuity. "There's a mystery, which is partly tied in with the ending, around what made this reality branch off in this way," he teases. "We start in a position that is broadly comparable to the X-Men's current situation in Utopia, which is like the last reference there is to their kind. There's an open question as to what their future might hold."

Describing it as, "a werewolf story with a historical setting," Carey is also scripting *The Lycan* for Thomas Jane's Raw Studios. He's also developing a new Vertigo mini that ties into the bestselling comic series, *The Unwritten*, which will soon enter its third year. "There's going to be a shift of focus," he says of the Peter Gross-drawn series. "Tommy, Lizzy and Savoy are going to try and piece together Wilson's past. What he was doing before he wrote the Tommy Taylor novels and his relationship with the secret cabal that is trying to kill Tom. A lot of the questions that we set up right from the start are going to be answered." CH

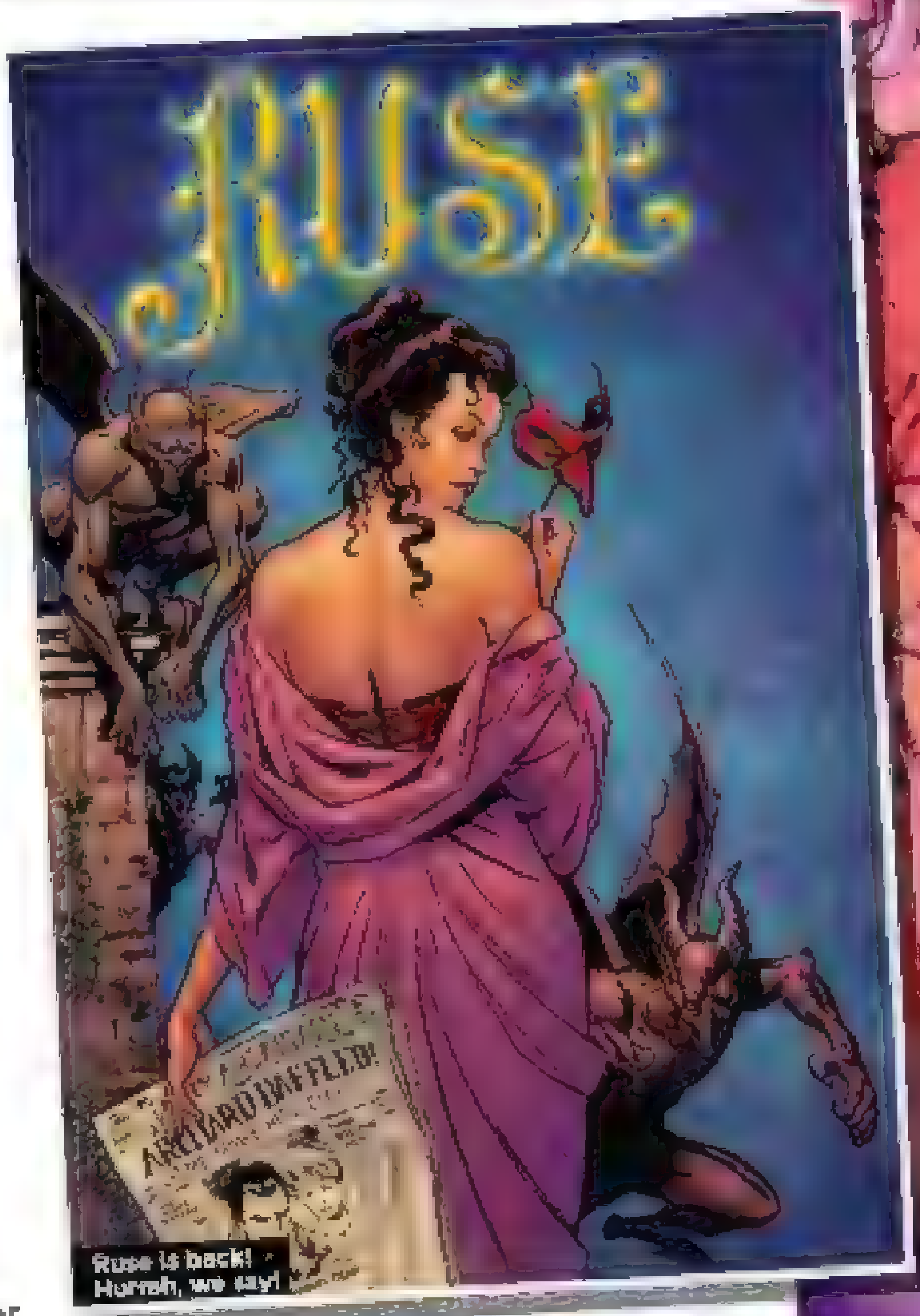
REVIVAL

CrossGen

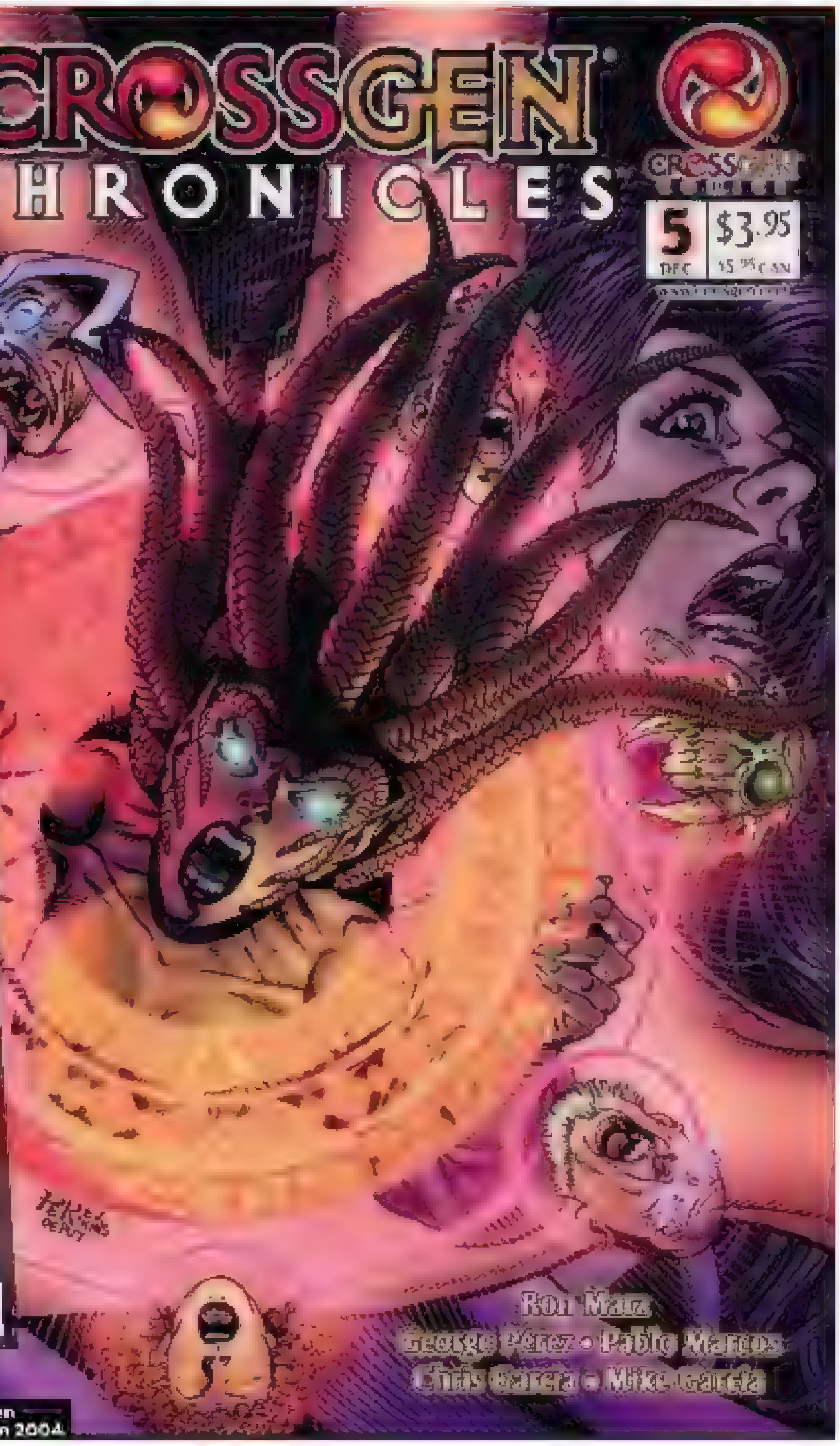
Marvel resurrects the fondly-remembered comics line, with **Mark Waid** at the forefront of the revival.

For Mark Waid, it's definitely an emotional homecoming. A decade ago the Alabama-born comics veteran was an editor and one of the principle contributors to the burgeoning independent CrossGen Entertainment's shared universe. Now six years after its demise, he is one of the talents behind Marvel's resurrection of the diverse sci-fi and fantasy flavoured line.

"I'm thrilled to see these creations revived and reimagined sans some of the continuity-heavy trappings," declares Waid, who confirms that the stories will start from scratch and that the characters won't interact with the main Marvel Universe. "We've been encouraged to think of them as stand-alone series, which is all for the better!"



Ruse is back! Hurrah, we say!



CrossGen closed in 2004

Waid will be helming *Ruse*, which centres around the world's greatest detective Simon Archard, who meets his match when he crosses paths with the enigmatic Emma Bishop. "I've never written anyone quite like Simon and I'm enjoying the hell out of revisiting him," says Waid, who is collaborating on the four-issue mini-series by artist Mirco Pierfederici. "It's the same basic set-up as before – Simon and Emma solving Victorian-era mysteries that are part Sherlock Holmes, part steampunk, part Lovecraft and part Poe. If you're a fan of the previous series, the only really marked difference is that it's no longer set on an Earth-like world, it's now set firmly in the fictional English city of Partington."

The man himself, Mark Waid.

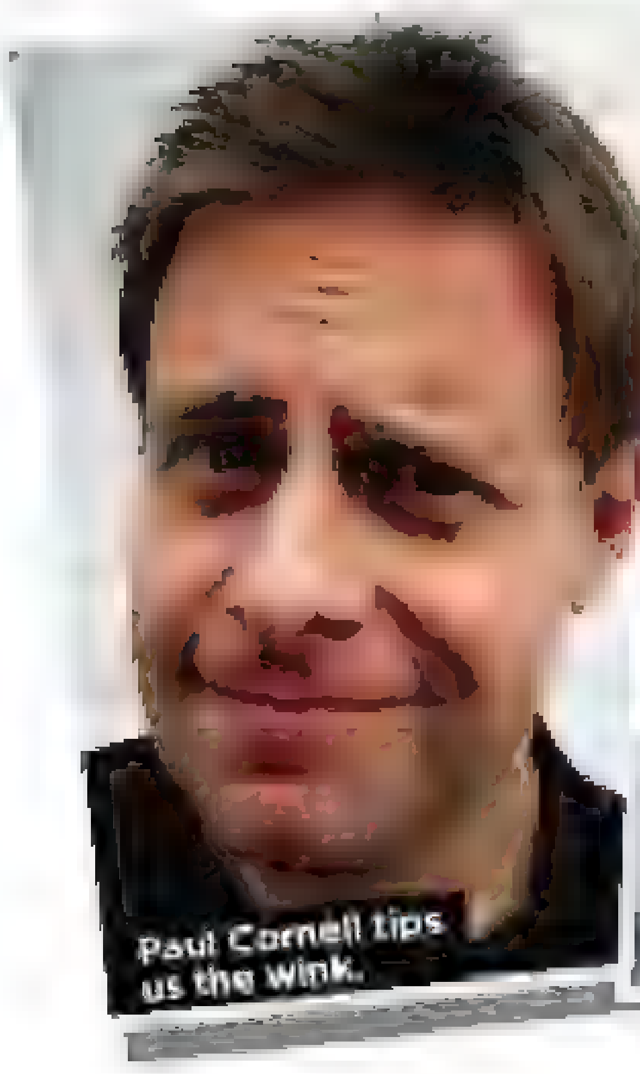
Waid compares the pair to a 19th century Reed Richards and Sue Storm. "Or maybe when Emma's in a particularly snarky mood, Ben Grimm," he laughs. "Their relationship, even more so than the mysteries themselves, is the glue that holds the series together. Their repartee is such a delight to write."

The story of emotionally paralysed teenager Samantha Rey who discovers that her distinctive birthmark indicates her membership to an arcane secret society, the four-part *Sigil* will be revived by *X-Men Legacy*'s Mike Carey and former *Captain Britain* artist Leonard Kirk. "She's part of a force that's fighting a war across time and because she bears the mark, she has no choice and it's not like she can decide whether or not to fight – she has to fight," says Carey, who describes the book as an adventure story with sci-fi and fantasy trappings. "It's not a superhero book, which was a big selling point for me. It doesn't take place in a crowded established continuity but a universe that we're building from the foundations up."

> "I'VE NEVER WRITTEN ANYONE QUITE LIKE SIMON AND I'M ENJOYING THE HELL OUT OF REVISITING HIM"

A newcomer to CrossGen, Carey was a fan of the original *Ruse* and would love to get his hands on the dynamic duo. "I loved the book back in the day," he fondly recalls. "I picked it up initially because Mike Perkins was the artist but it was a great concept and a fun, exciting book, which was unusual and fresh. There are no plans for crossovers at the moment but if Mark ever needs a pinch-hitter, I would love to write Simon and Emma." CH

KAPOW! COMIC CON
9TH & 10TH APRIL 2011


Paul Cornell tips us the wink.

And good ol' Hitchy is there!

London Goes Kapow! In April

A new comic con promises to rival San Diego here in the UK. **David West** investigates...

On 9 and 10 April, Kapow! Comic Con promises to bring the experience of the San Diego Comic Con to London. Taking place at the Business Design Centre in Islington, Kapow! boasts a guest list that includes John Romita Jr, Dave Gibbons, Frank Quitely, Leinil Yu and Bryan Hitch. Fan-favourite comic writer Mark Millar (see page 14!) will be in attendance, alongside many celebrity contributors to his *CLiNT* magazine, including comedians Frankie Boyle and Stewart Lee, and *Doctor Who* actor Noel Clarke.

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On Saturday 9 April, Kapow! will host the inaugural Stan Lee Awards, celebrating all that is good and great about the world of comics. "This is a fantastic platform to reward the cream of comic book talent for all their creativity and imagination throughout 2010, which has brought us so much entertainment and inspiration," says Lee himself.

The nominees for the Awards will be chosen by a select panel including *Green Hornet* and *Superbad* star Seth Rogen, *Lost* creator Damon Lindelof, comedian Al Murray, *Comic Heroes*' very own Jes Bickham and Clark Duke from *Kick-Ass* and *Hot Tub Time Machine*.

"Stan Lee has probably influenced popular culture more than any other living person, so it's a great honour for me to continue in that tradition by being a judge for the Stans," says Duke. "And I'm hoping Stan will end up giving me a nickname (something dynamic like 'Clobberin Clark Duke' would be ideal)." You can get involved and register your vote for the Stans by visiting the Kapow! website.

MOVIE MAGIC

While diehard fans may never forgive Sylvester Stallone for his *Judge Dredd* movie, Andrew MacDonald, producer of the new *Dredd* big-screen adaptation, will be on hand to talk about the lawman's latest cinematic. "It's fantastic to be involved with Kapow! and I'm really looking forward to talking to all the fans about our upcoming *Dredd* movie," says MacDonald, whose credits include *28 Days Later*, *The Last King Of Scotland*, *Trainspotting* and *Shallow Grave*. "I'll be on the *2000 AD* panel with a little taster of what people can look forward to from our 2012 release."

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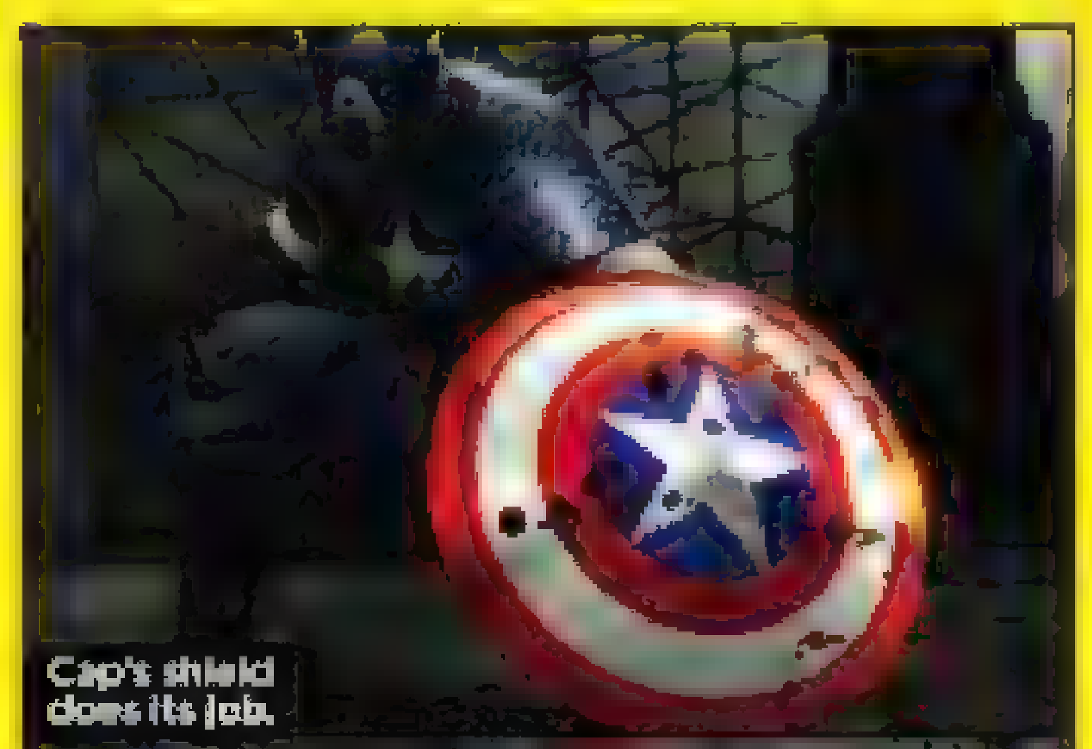
Cap lands a sweet right-hander.

TASTE THE SHIELD OF JUSTICE

Sega fights for truth, justice and the Captain America way

Sega will release its new game *Captain America: Super Soldier* this summer, to tie in with the release of the movie *Captain America: The First Avenger* (see right for more on this). *Avengers and Union Jack* writer Christos Gage has created the storyline for the game, which pits Cap against the forces of Hydra (what, the Nazis just weren't evil enough?) during World War 2. The gameplay promises to maximise the use of Cap's legendary shield. Not only can you bash Hydra goons in the kisser with it, you can use it to redirect incoming enemy fire back at your opponents, taking them out with their own attacks. *Captain America: Super Soldier* will be released on Nintendo Wii, Nintendo DS, PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360 when it arrives. CH


Cap's shield does its job.

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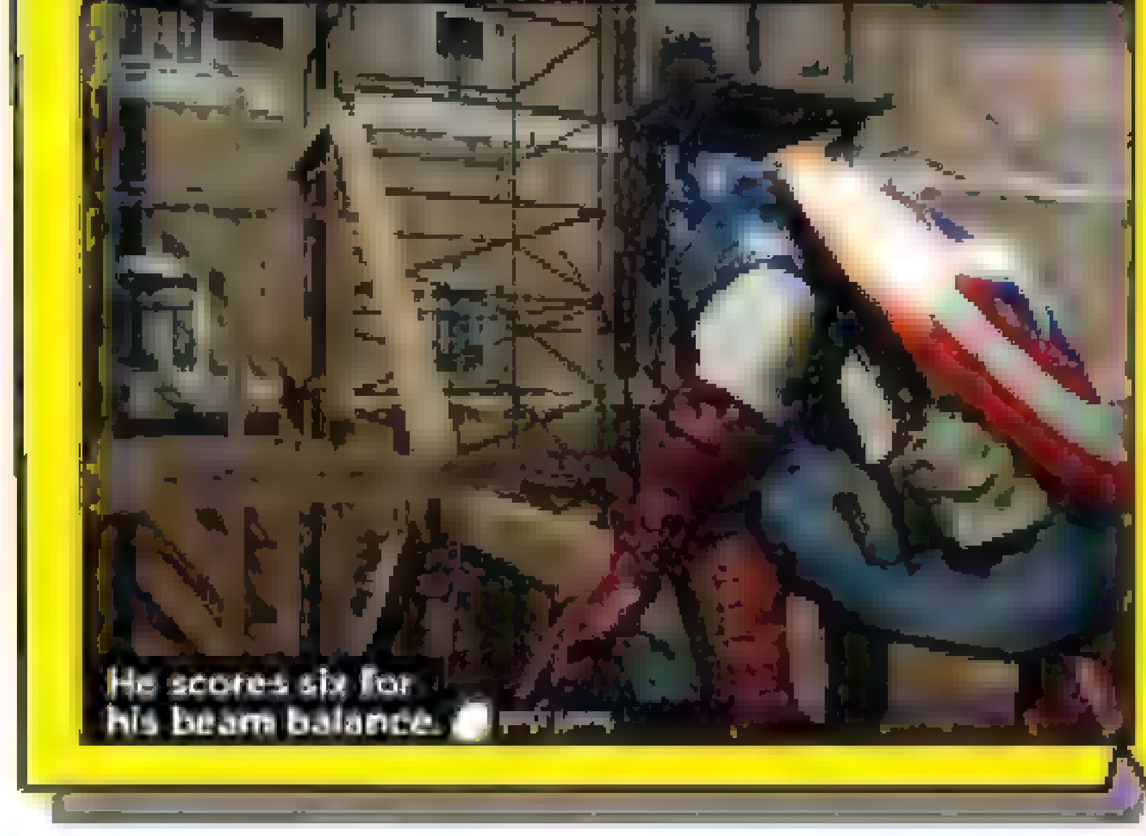
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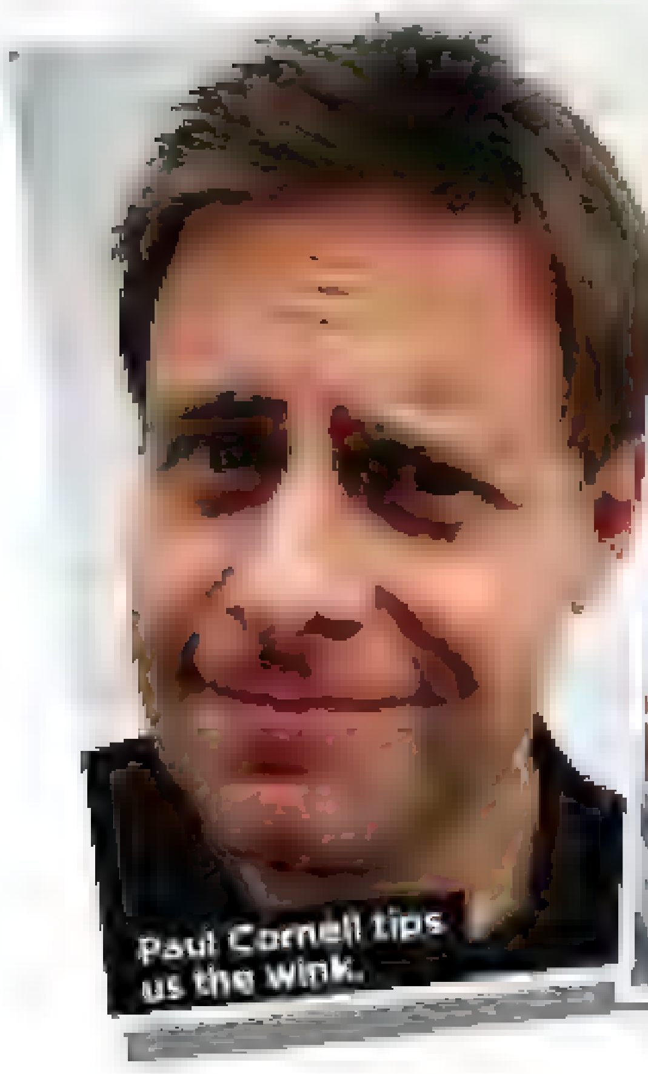

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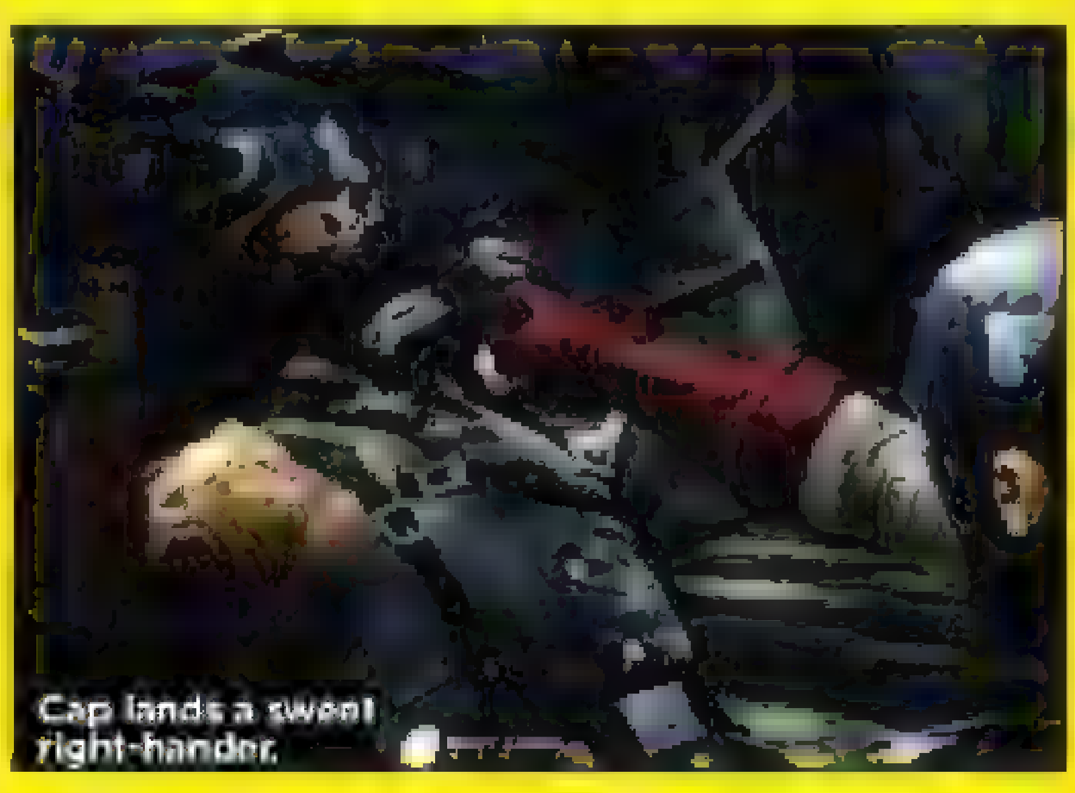

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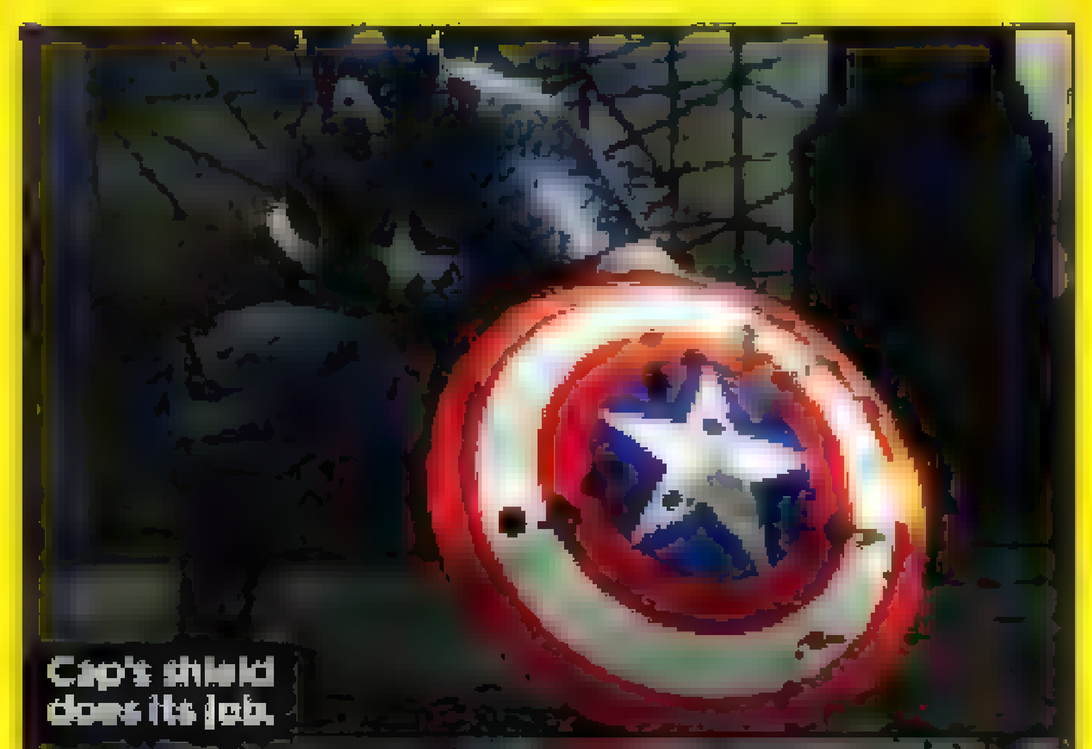

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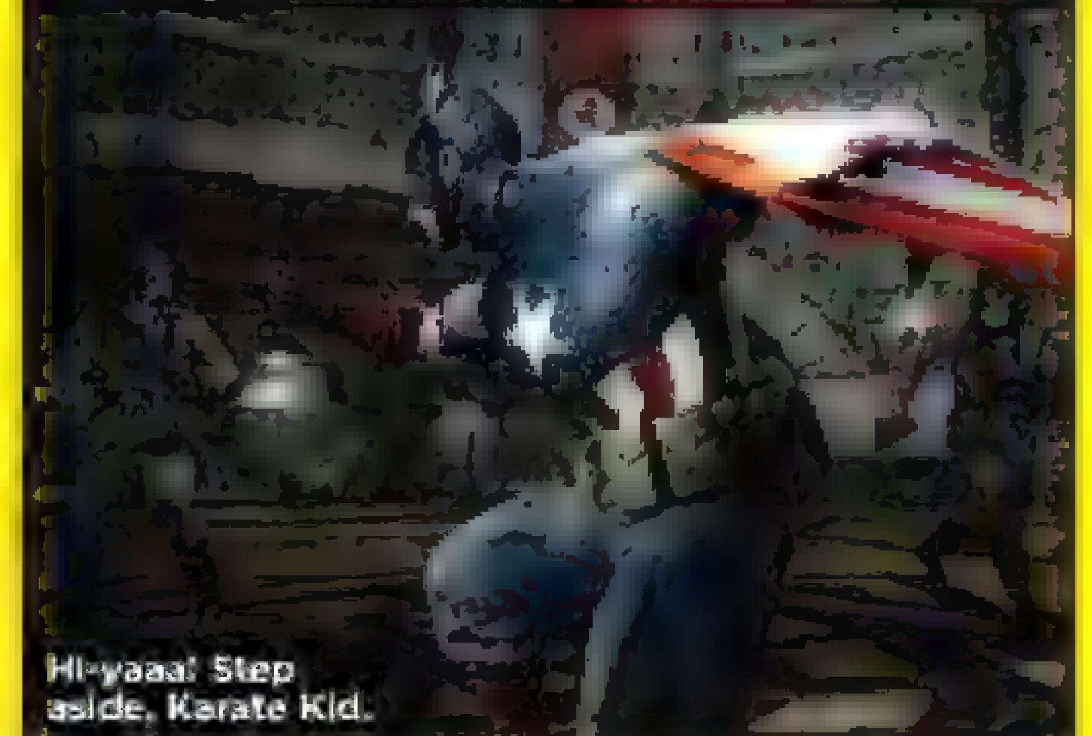

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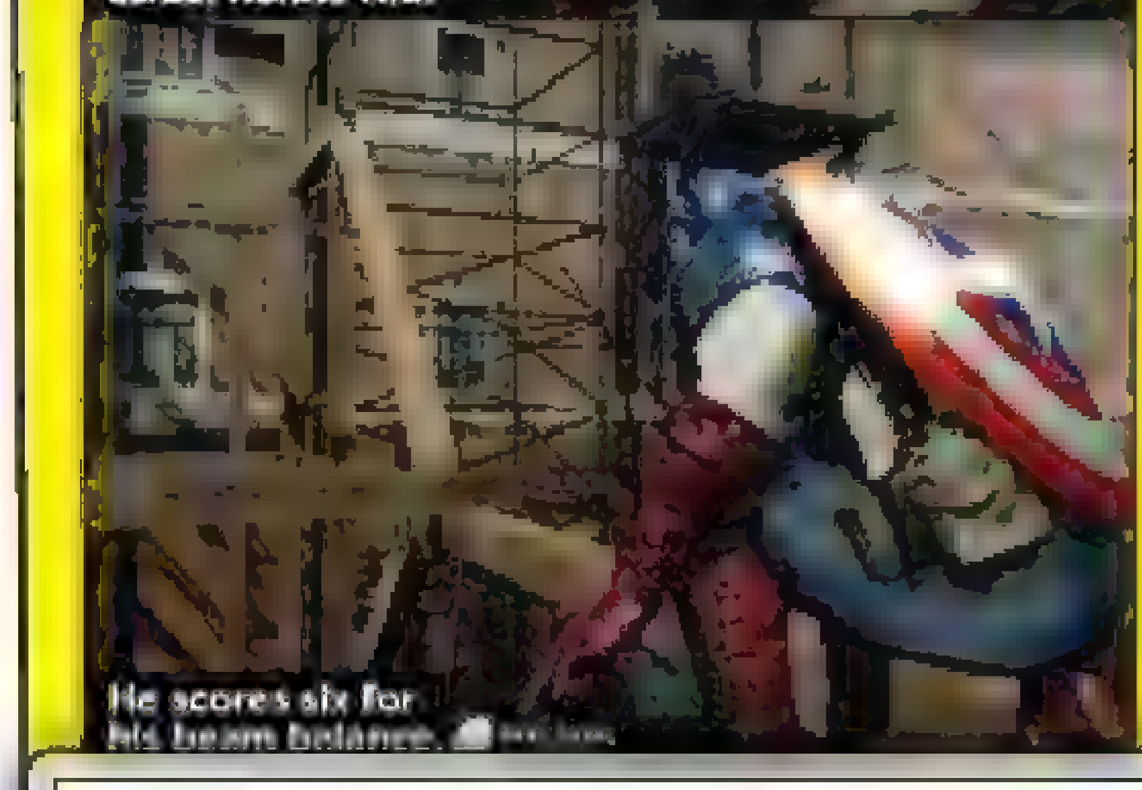

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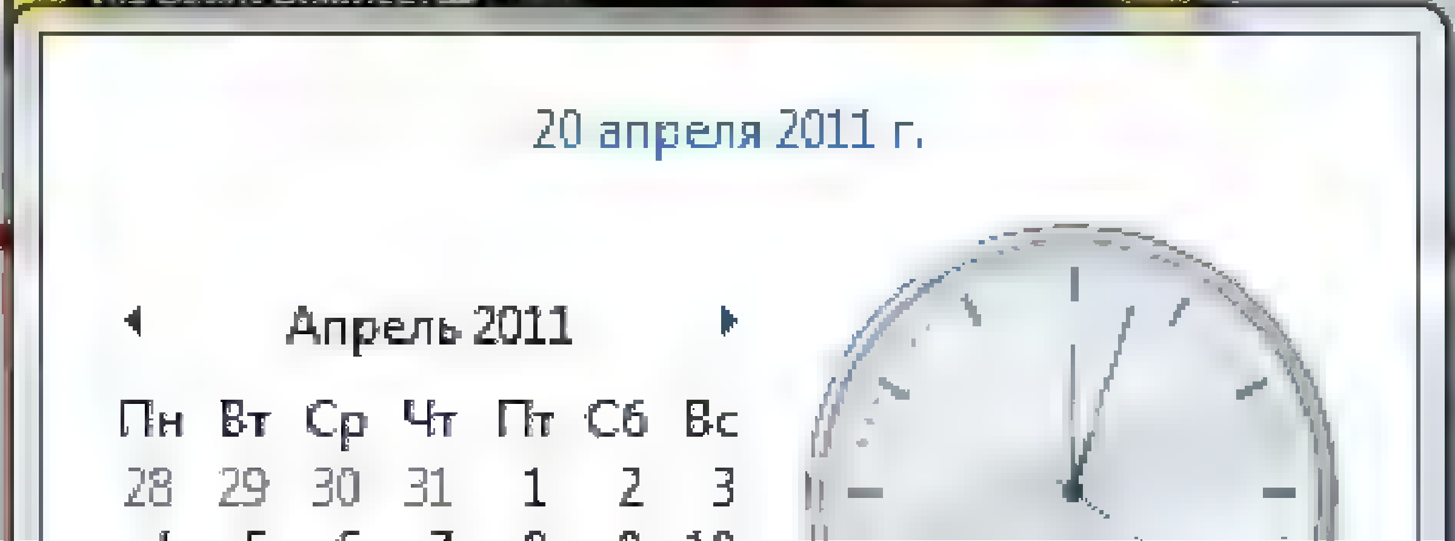

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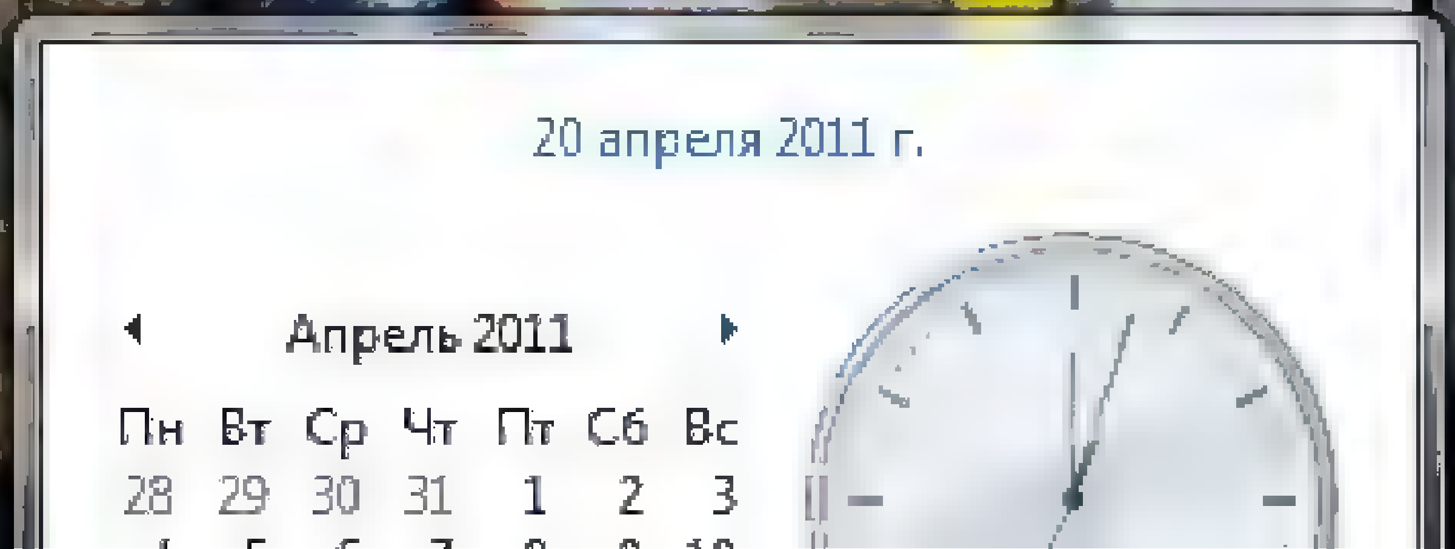
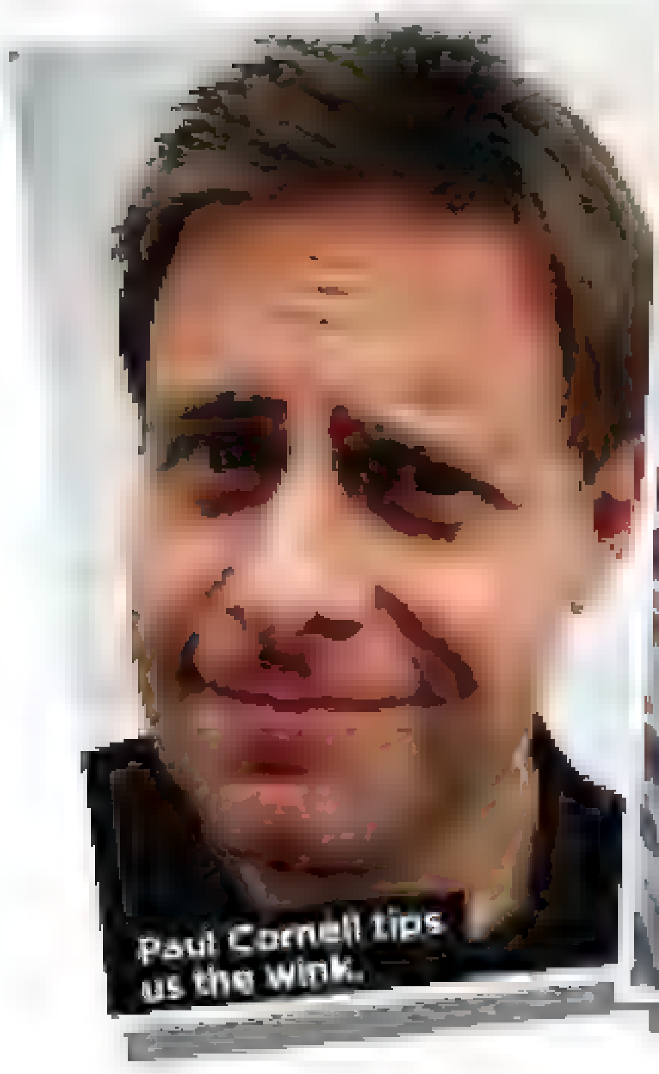


KAPOW!! COMIC CON

9TH & 10TH APRIL 2011



Paul Cornell tips us the wink.

And good ol' Hitchy is there!

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A new comic con promises to rival San Diego here in the UK. **David West** investigates...

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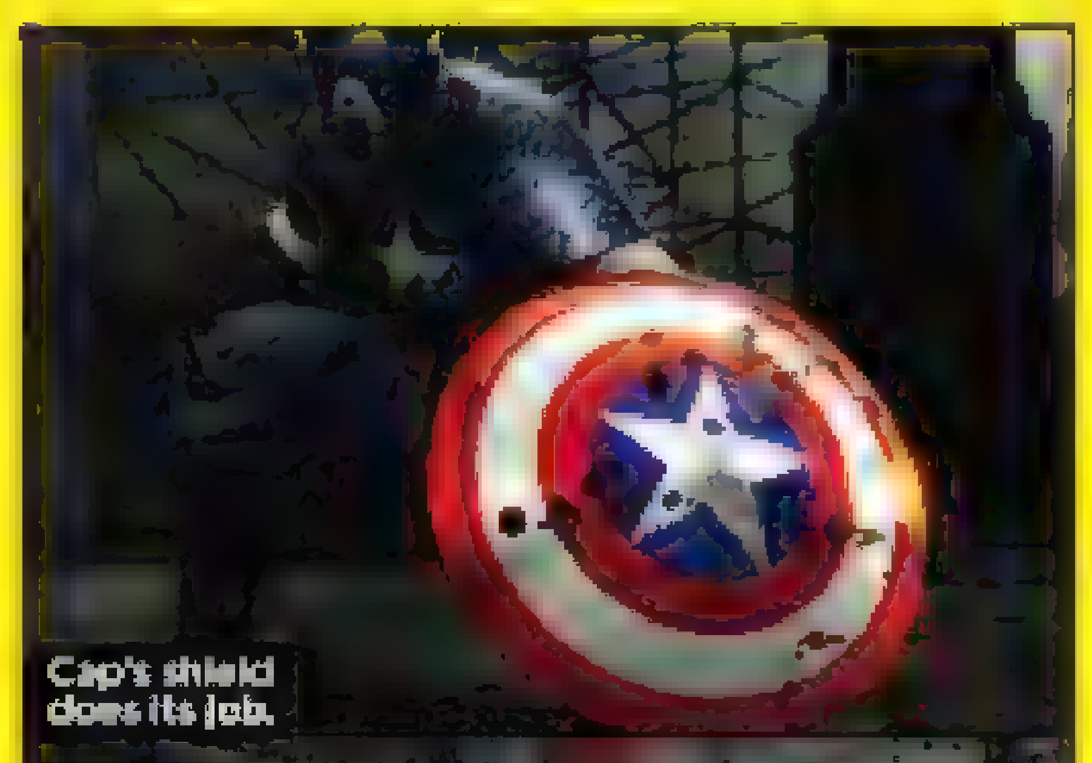

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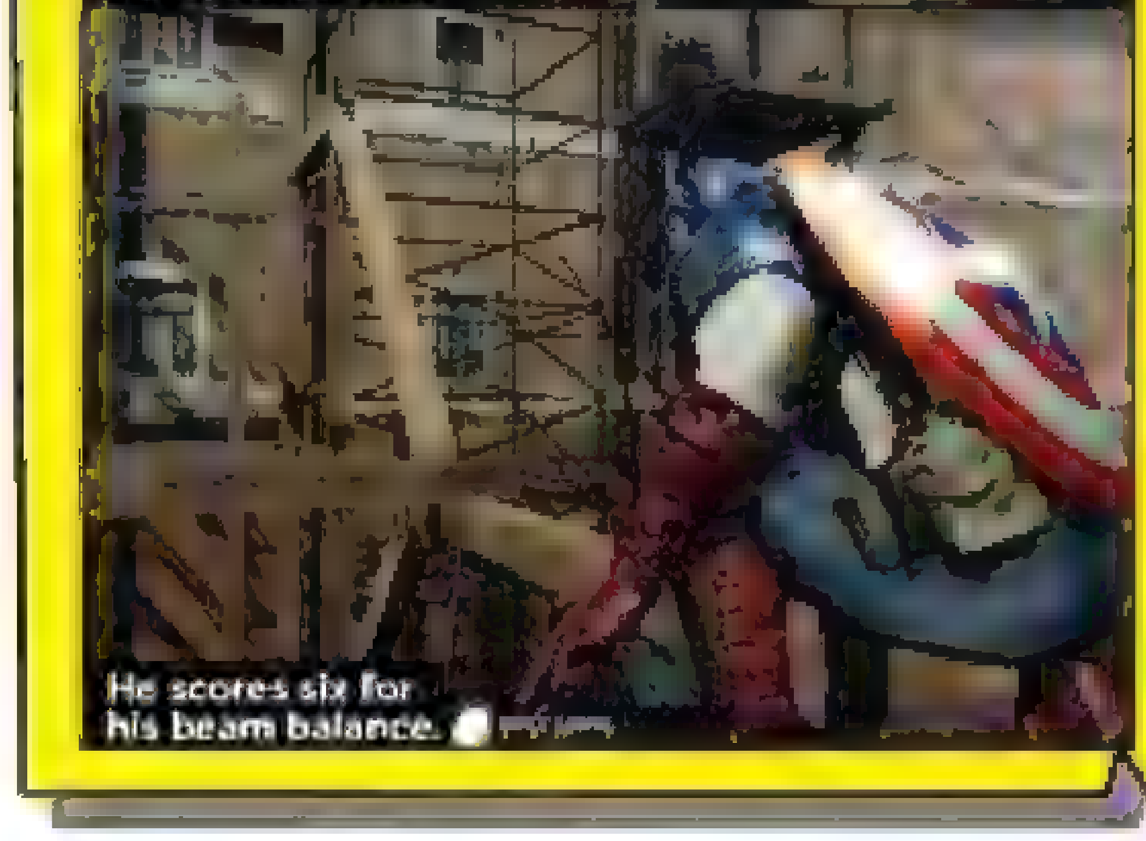
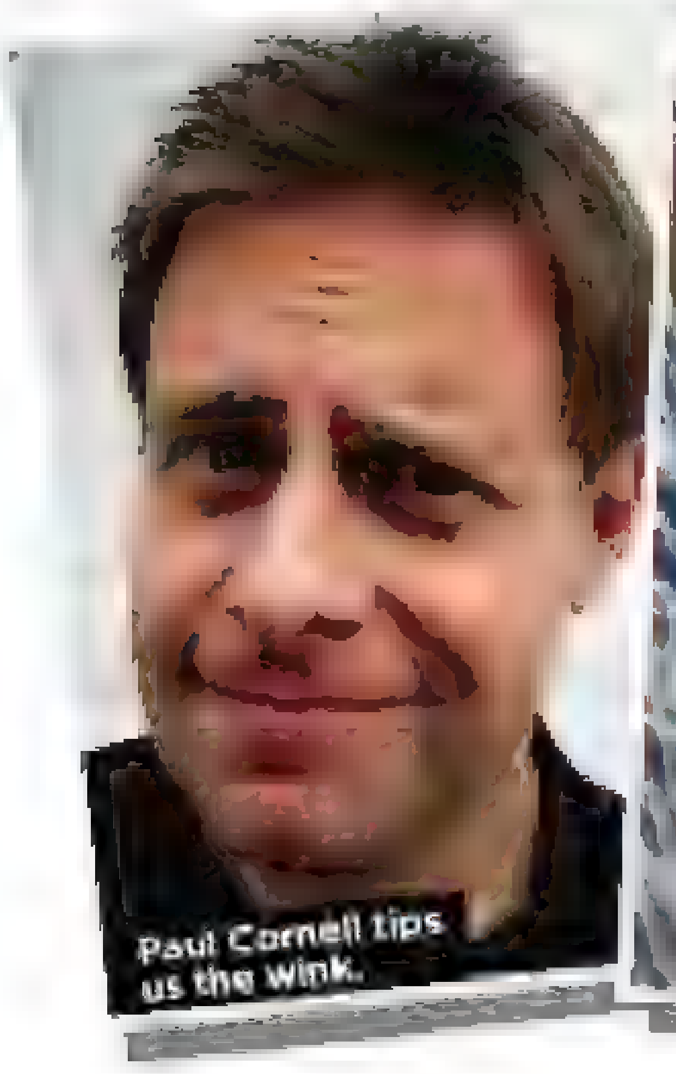


He scores six for his beam balance.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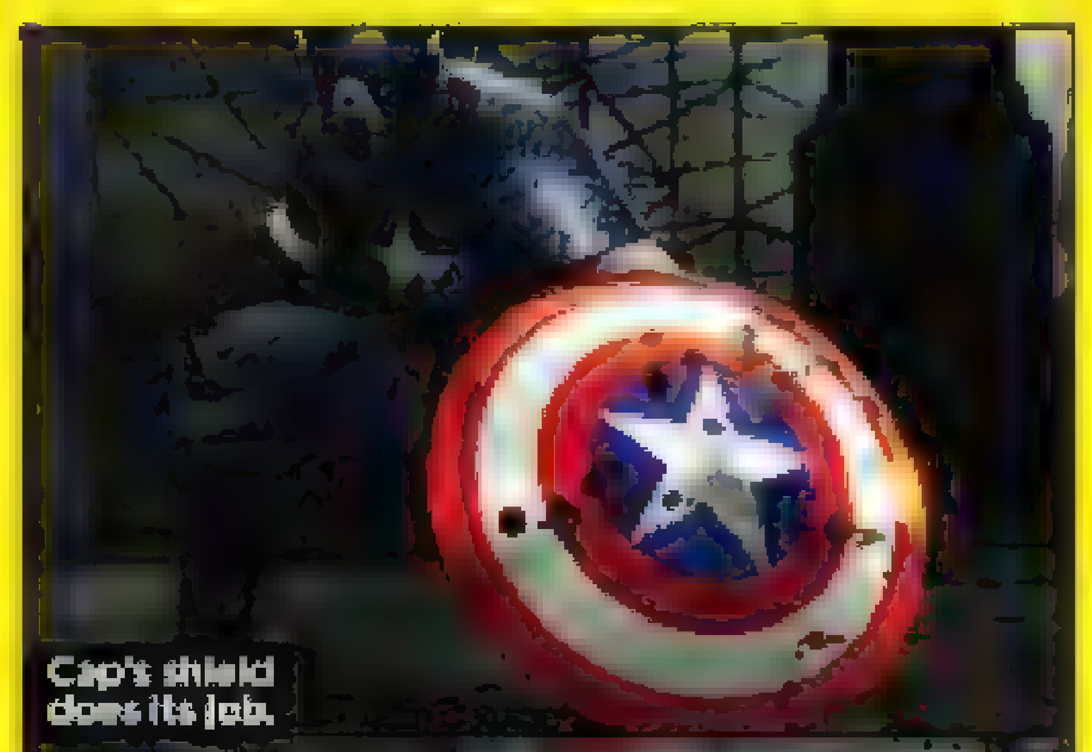
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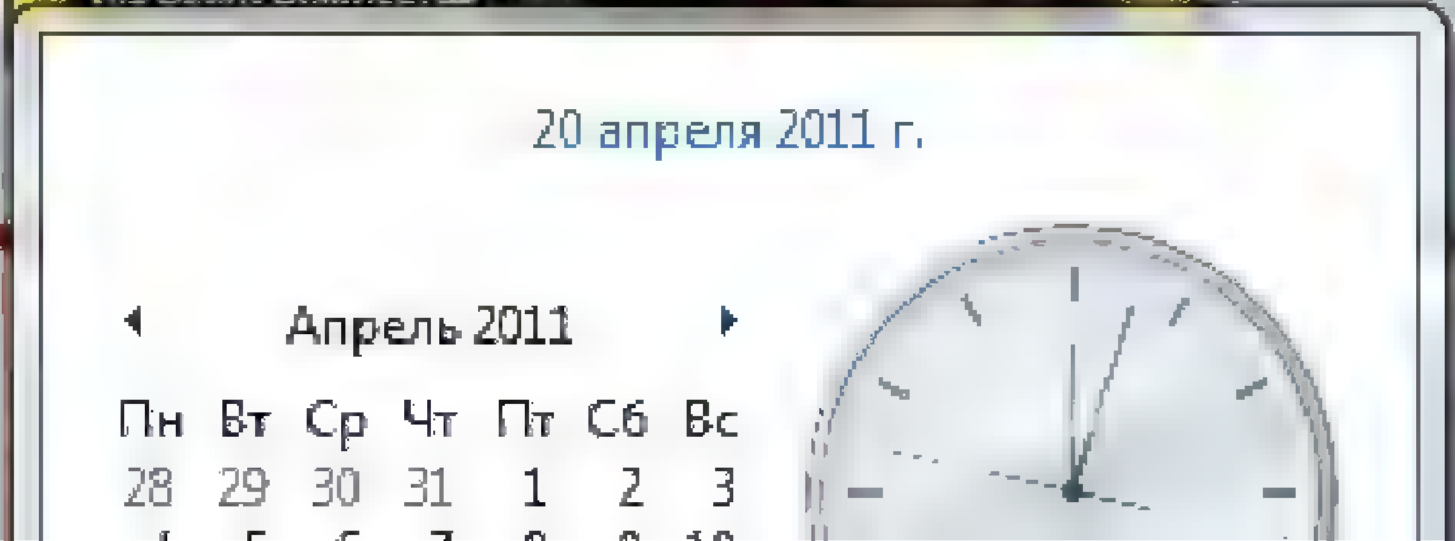
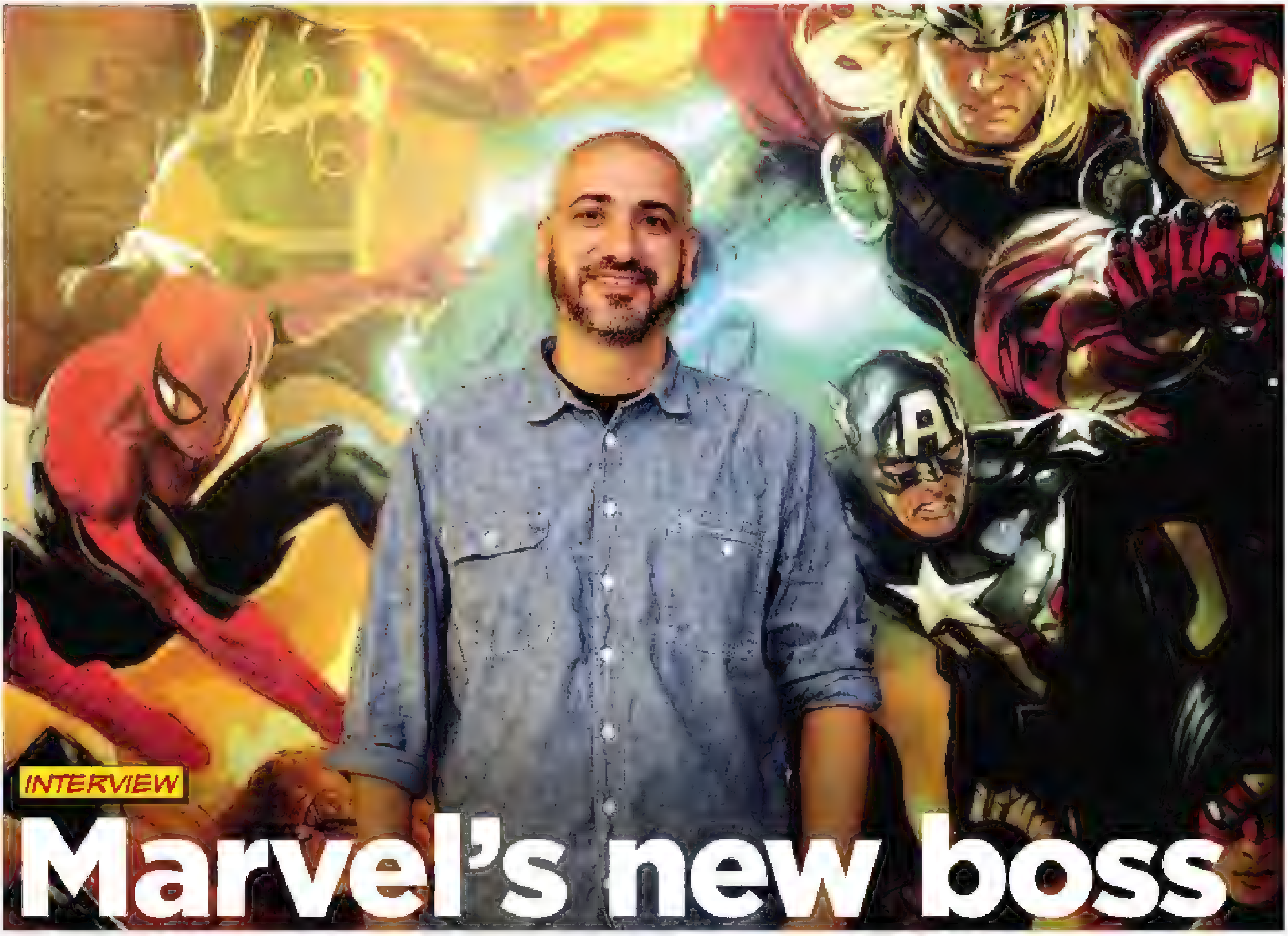




INTERVIEW

Marvel's new boss

Axel Alonso, the new Marvel Editor-in-Chief, tells us what the X-Men taught him and why all comic book careers should start on a fishing boat. **By Jim McLauchlin**

Q It seems you took what is probably the most unlikely route ever to a career in comics, yes?

A You could say that. I was in my early 20s when I was reintroduced to comics on a fishing boat off the coast of Alaska. I went to a dog-eared and coverless pile of magazines on the boat, looking for something to read. It was almost all porn, but I did find a *Swamp Thing* comic written by this guy, Alan Moore. I was blown away. I realised that I had been missing out on something in the ten to 15 years since I had read comics.

So next time I was back home in California, I went to a comic store and told the guy, "I need more of this, this Alan Moore guy." He gave me more and also introduced me to Frank Miller and any of a number of other writers. It sparked a new interest for me.

Q So you're not a dyed-in-the-wool fanboy. Why does that make you right for this job?

A I think people underestimate my geekdom! There are a lot of characters that I really geek over – Shang-Chi, Deathlok, Luke Cage, the Hulk, and more. However, I do lack that encyclopedic knowledge. I have learned a healthy respect for the continuity, but I always have a focus on the horizon, that 'what's next'. As long as I have an able staff to help me out with the past, I can keep my eye on the future.

Q You once told me you were a very unlikely guy to have been made editor of Marvel's *X-Men* books. But having done that role, what do you think you learnt from it?

A When given the job, I was honestly terrified, because I knew nothing about them. But I did my research and I now love the characters. The big change was, I was used to being an editor who was told, "Go find a cool way to tell a story with this character." But with the X-Men, I had to tell one story across many, many books. It was a different exercise, a great education. I now realise it was a necessary mid-step to my becoming Editor-in-Chief. They set me up!

Q Is there one great underachieving Marvel character you think you can make shine and that people will love?

A Deathlok. I have an eye on where Deathlok will be going over the next months, into a year. I want to be very cautious, let him grow and build. But I want to make Deathlok a more integral part of the Marvel Universe.

Q When all is said and done, what do you want your tenure in this position to be remembered for?

A I wish I could give you a snappy answer, but I don't know how much you can control perception and what's remembered. I hope fans love me, but if they hate me, I'll take the barbs. I just want to come into the job every day with enthusiasm and show this staff that I have huge respect for how much I care about them and their efforts. Then we'll let history decide.

> "I WANT TO MAKE DEATHLOK A MORE INTEGRAL PART OF THE MARVEL UNIVERSE"

MIKE PERKINS

THE VIEW FROM A BOARD

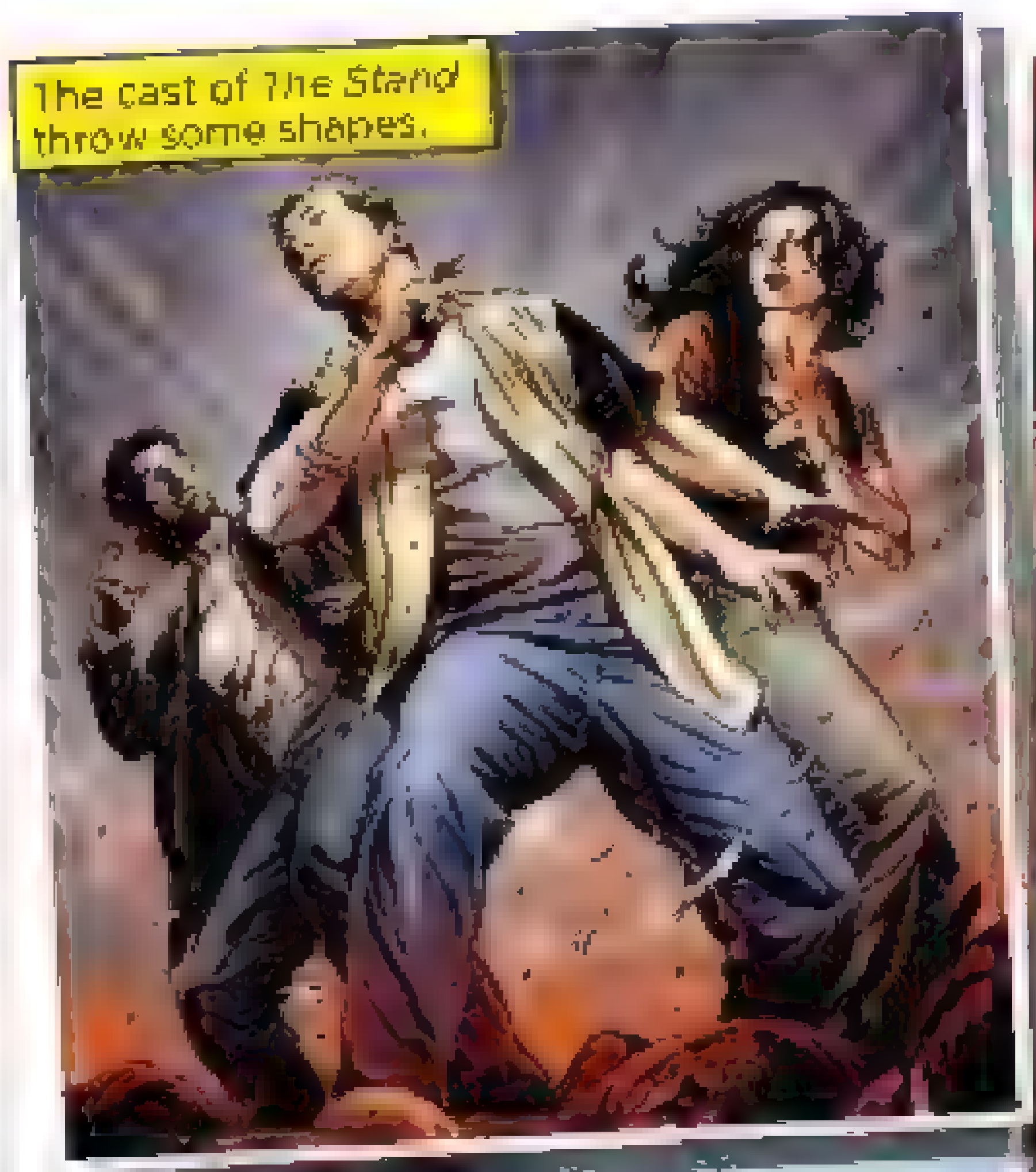
Mike Perkins, artist extraordinaire on Marvel's adaptation of Stephen King's *The Stand*, talks about the process and problems of adapting from novel to comic...

As I write, I'm two-thirds of the way through illustrating Marvel's adaptation of Stephen King's epic novel *The Stand*. It started out as a daunting challenge and continues to be so – not from the 31-issue length, but rather from the expectations.

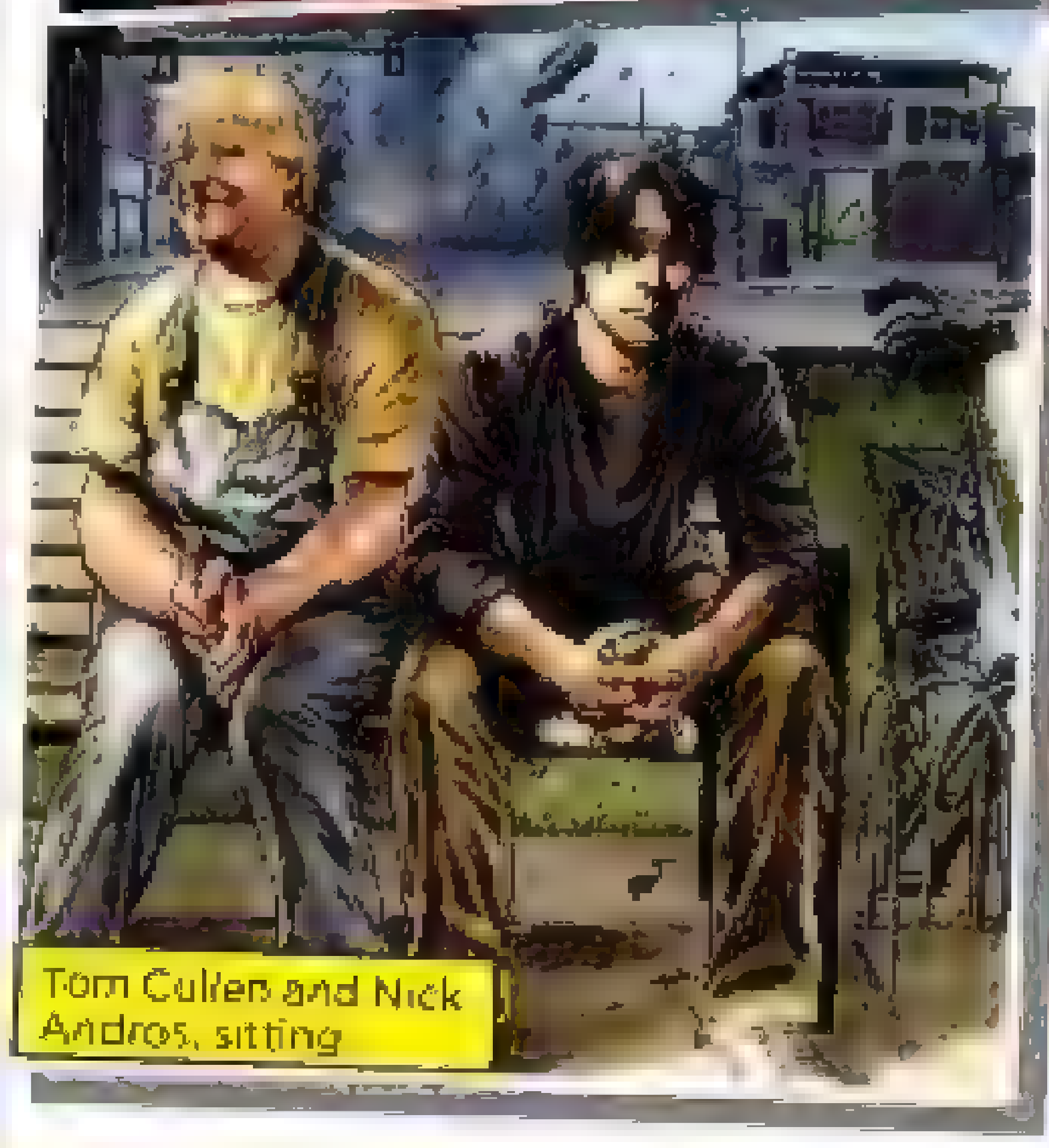
These are the expectations of millions of readers who have devoured, and sometimes studied, this novel, and each one of those readers has their own vivid imagination and singular vision of what they have read. As opposed to a purely visual entertainment medium – which can often times be entirely passive – literature has the power to fire up those parts of the brain that allow for the visualisation of character and consequences in a very particular, unique way.

I wish I could say I've found a way to assuage all those expectations but that would be totally disingenuous of me. The only comfort I can give to any reader of *The Stand* is to explain that I've stayed as close as I could to the original descriptions within the source material and have had confirmation from Mr King himself that some of the characters are exactly how he saw them when he originally started the novel.

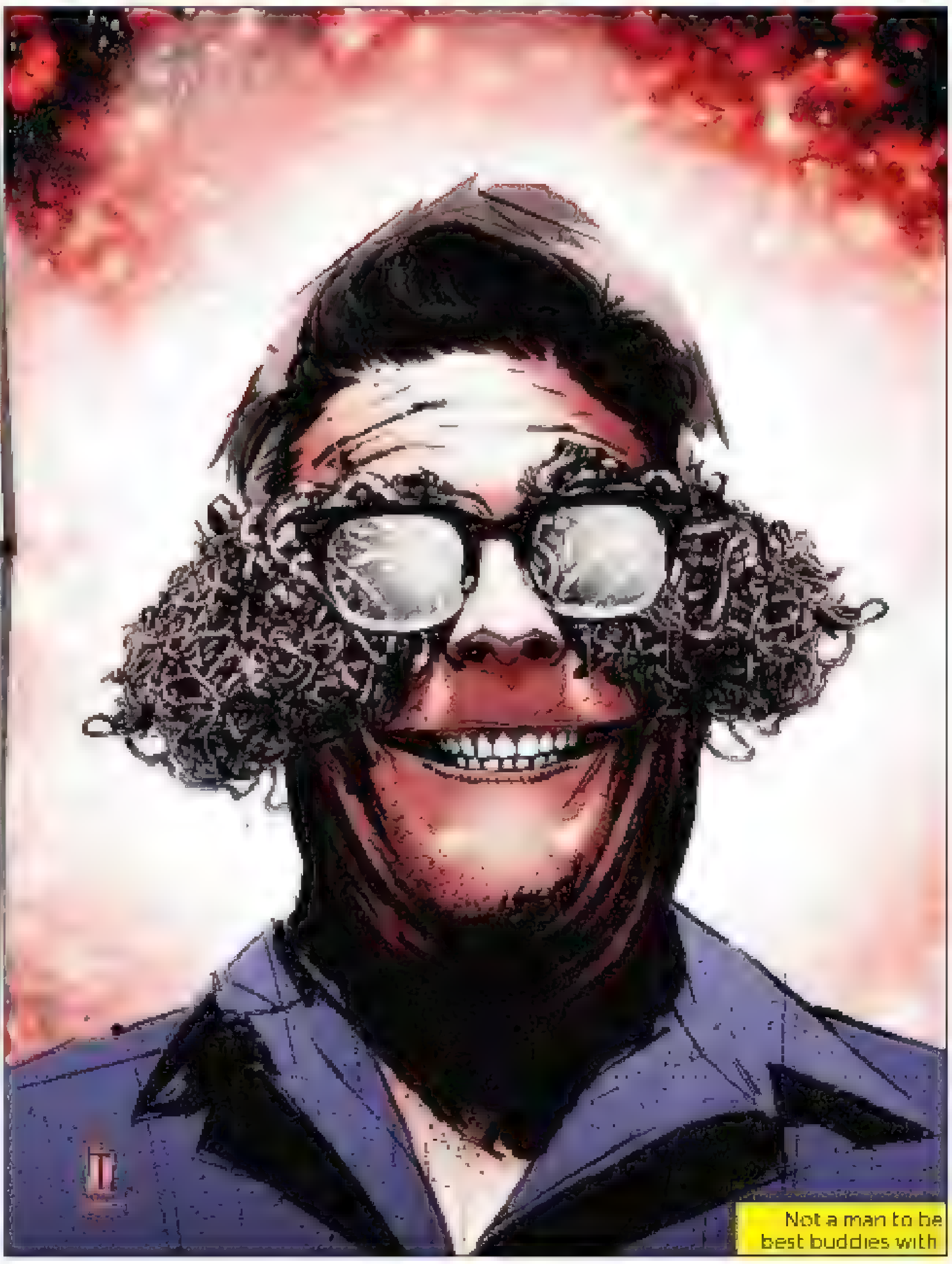
Of course, I have the added bonus of having a script in front of me, which has taken away a lot of the hard work. It must be doubly difficult for the adapting writer to tackle the entire novel in front of them. I've taken this opportunity to ask two writers, with whom I have worked on adaptations of famous works as well as them having adapted additional works for other artists, what presents itself as the most difficult aspect with regards to adapting a novel into comic form.



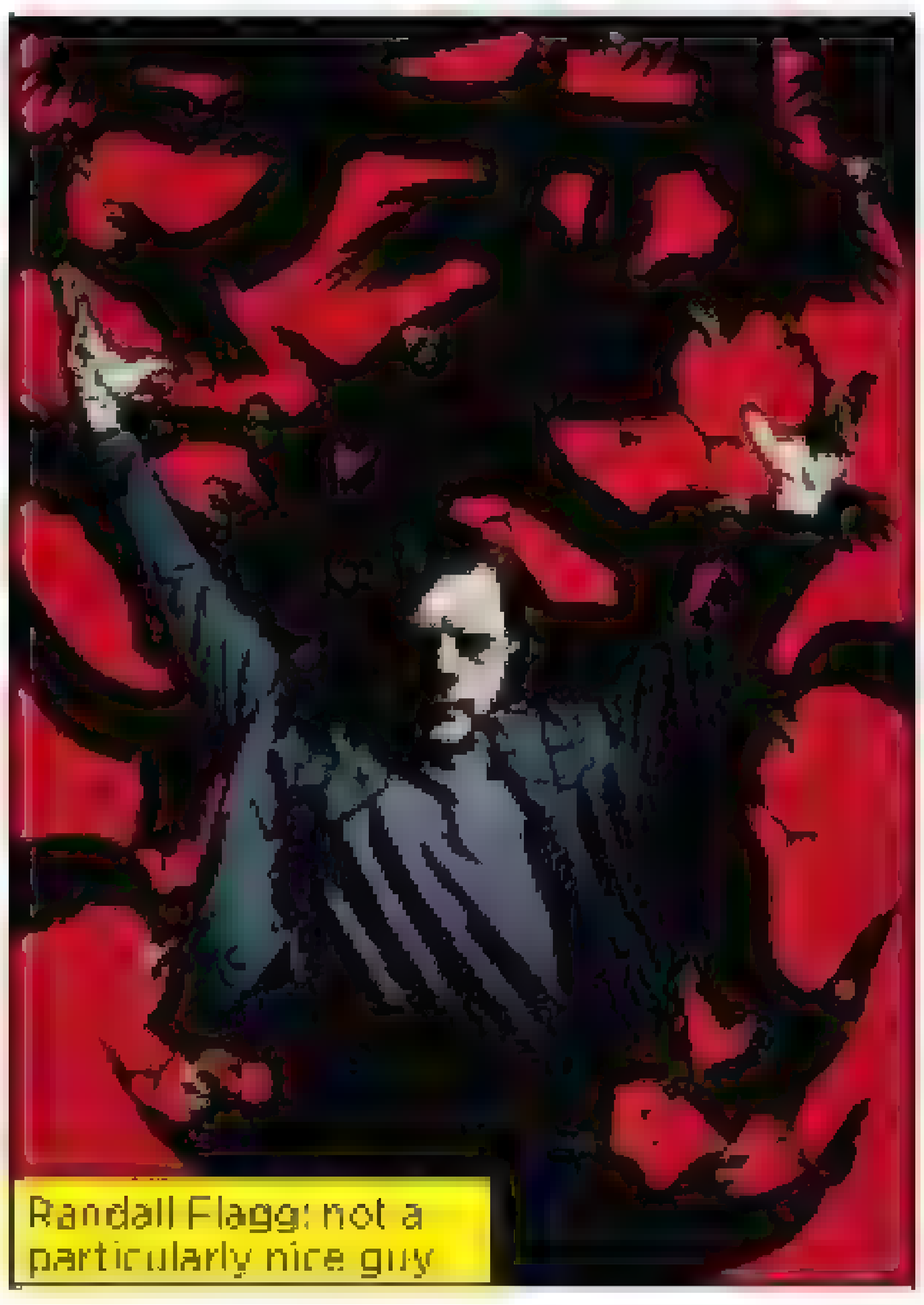
The cast of *The Stand* throw some shapes.



Tom Cullen and Nick Andros, sitting



Not a man to be best buddies with



Randall Flagg: not a particularly nice guy

"I'VE STAYED AS CLOSE AS I COULD TO THE ORIGINAL DESCRIPTIONS WITHIN THE SOURCE MATERIAL"

Mike Carey (*Doctor Faustus, Neverwhere, Ender's Shadow Battle School*)
"I'd say with any adaptation, avoid the temptation to simply copy stuff across. Comics work very differently from novels, and consequently you have to find different ways of hitting the same beats.

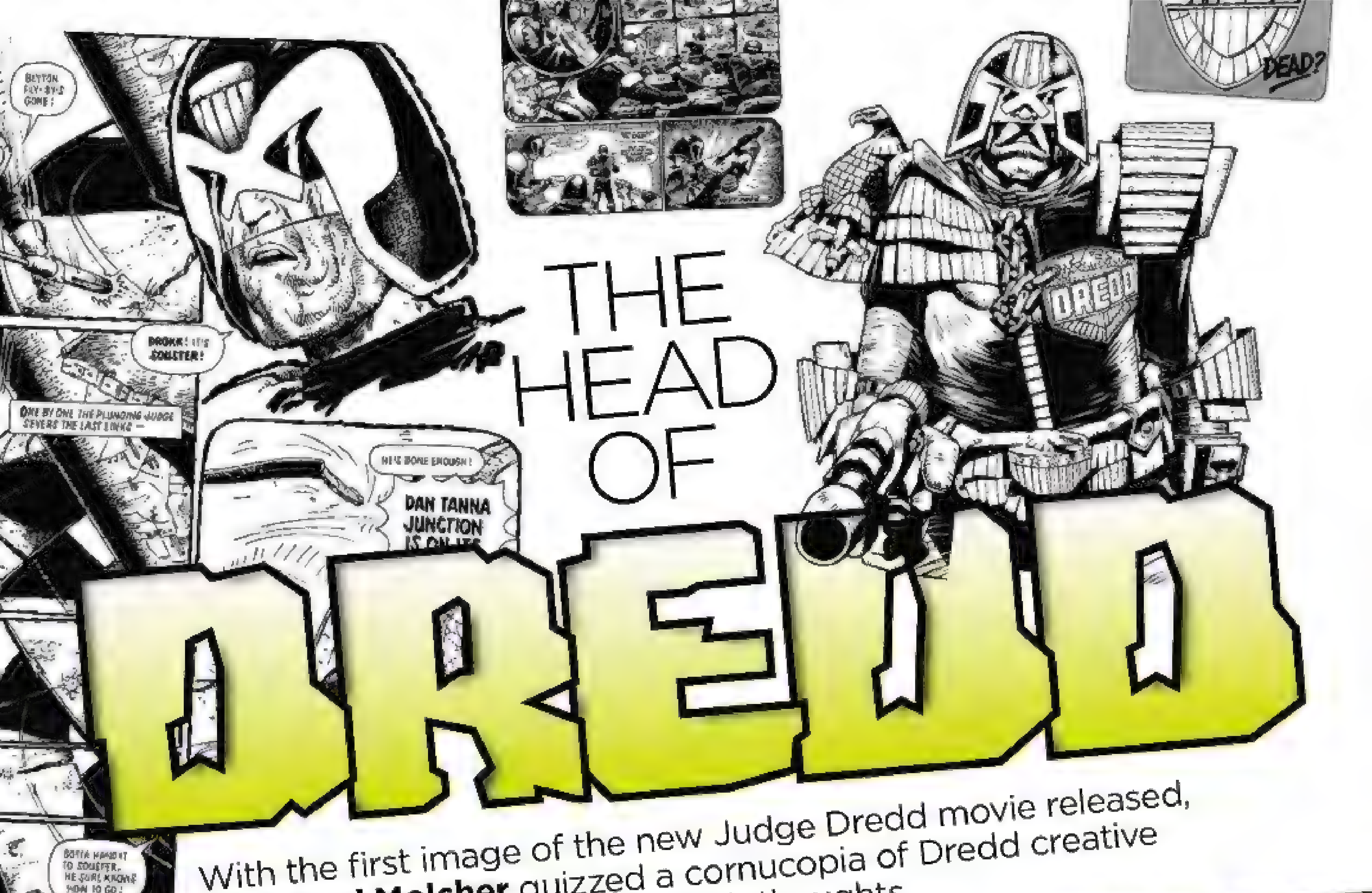
One particular thing I've noticed is that novels are very tolerant of immensely long conversations, and it can often be a really good way – in a novel – of defining character. In a comic, you absolutely don't have that luxury. You have to streamline conversation, because there's a maximum loading of dialogue for one panel and for one page. You could easily fill an entire issue with a conversation that wouldn't feel overly long in a novel. So you have to identify the essential beats of the conversation and make sure they stay in, then find other ways of doing all the other things that the conversation is doing in the novel.

Another, more prosaic point: omniscient narrator is still a natural and invisible style of storytelling in novels. In comics, although it can be used, it's never invisible; it's a marked choice. The engaged first person narrator is much more common – and having no narrative voice is commonest of all."

Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa (*The Stand*)
"For me, there are a couple of challenges. The first is to condense the source material without reducing it to, essentially, an illustrated summary, like the old *Classics Illustrated* comic books, which I love, but which, to my mind, are essentially glorified Cliffs Notes.

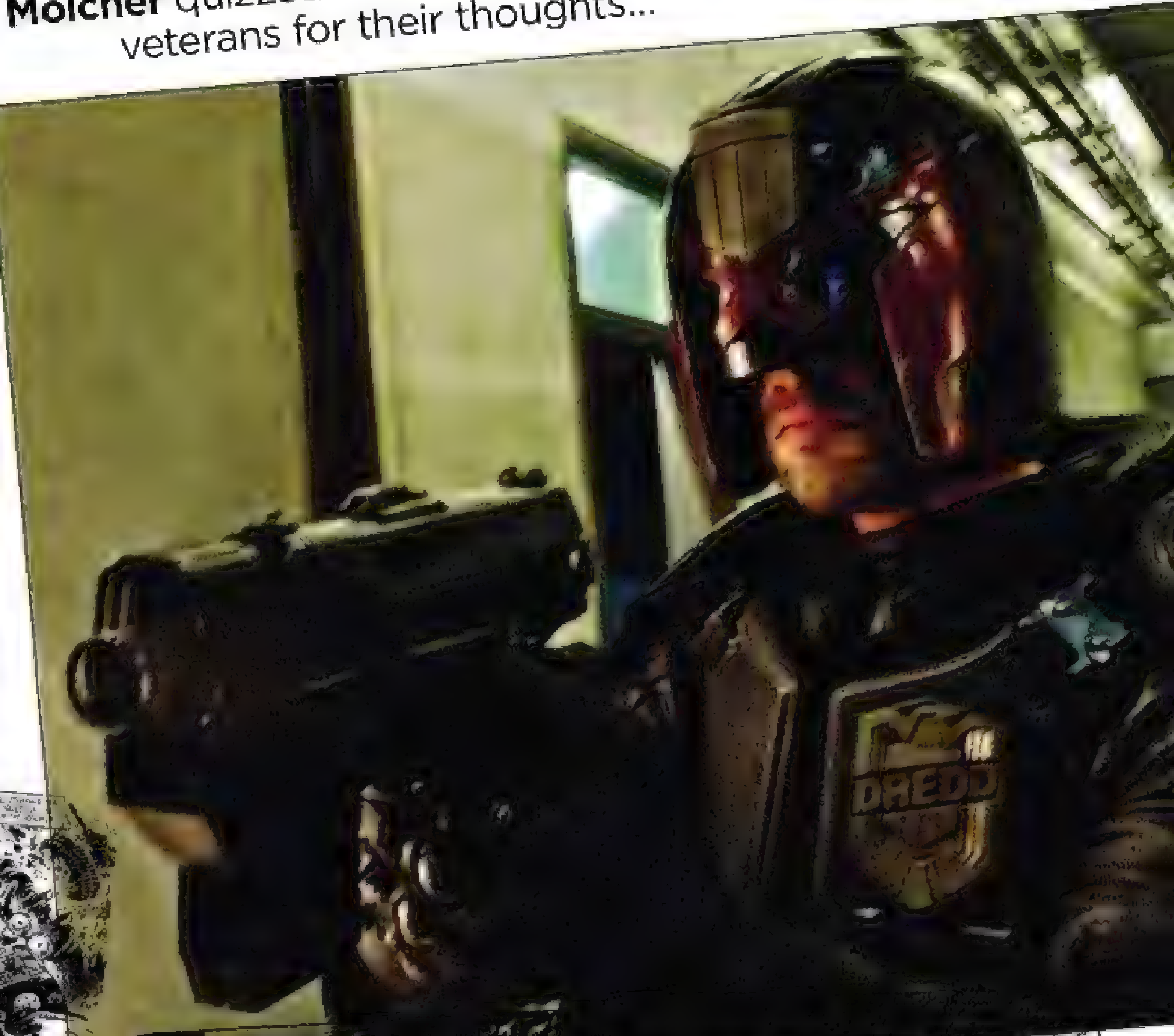
The second challenge is to maintain your passion for something that is, at core, someone else's story. It helps, of course, when you love what you're adapting, but I can't imagine taking on a project with the scope of *The Stand* if I didn't absolutely love the novel, which I do. You have to be ready to live with the material for three or four years. Otherwise, don't do it."

■ There are currently four volumes of Marvel's adaptation of Stephen King's *The Stand* released in comic and book stores, with two more volumes to follow until completion.


BEYTON FLY-BY'S GONE!
DROKK! IT'S SOUSTER!
ONE BY ONE THE PLUNGING JUDGE SEVERS THE LAST LINKS —
HE'S GONE ENOUGH!
DAN TANNA JUNCTION IS ON ITS
DREDD
DEAD?
GOTTA HAND IT TO SOUSTER. HE SURE KNOWS HOW TO GO!

THE HEAD OF DREDD

With the first image of the new Judge Dredd movie released, **Michael Molcher** quizzed a cornucopia of Dredd creative veterans for their thoughts...



Put aside your shiny shoulder pads and codpieces – Judge Dredd's return to the big screen looks set to banish memories of Stallone's 1995 flop.

Filming on the nattily-named *Dredd* is well underway in Cape Town. Scripted by *28 Days Later* writer Alex Garland and directed by Pete Travis, the $45 million flick will see Karl Urban become the lawman of the dystopian future, in 3D, alongside Olivia Thirlby as psychic rookie, Cassandra Anderson.

With the release of the first image of Urban's Dredd, *Comic Heroes* asked some of the artists and writers to have brought ol' stoney face to life on the page to give their first impressions of how he appears on screen...

STRIKE HARD – STRIKE FAST – GET OUT!

FORWARD THE METAL LEGIONS!
DREDD

THE LAW COMES TO FAST-MEG ONE...WITH A BANG
2000 AD
JUDGE DREDD
HOTSHOT!
MAN FIRING FROM CORNER WINDOW –
UGGH

FOR FR
JUSTICE!
MEGA-CITY ONE!

David Bishop

former *2000 AD* and *Judge Dredd Megazine* editor

Stubble? Hmm, not so sure about that. Otherwise I think this glimpse of the new cinematic Dredd looks promising. I Don't mind the old school interpretation of the uniform, because it's far more practical. Show us more, creeps!

John Higgins

Dredd artist

I'm very pleased with Karl Urban as Dredd, I'm a major fan of his work. Good looking but with a believable hard edge, he was one of the best things in *Chronicles of Riddick*.

My question, on seeing the first photo of Urban in full Dredd uniform, is: Is it 'my' Dredd, big chin, big gun, big shoulder pads? And the answer is, 'No it's not'. But once I step away from all we love about the graphic interpretation of Dredd, I like what I see. A lot.

Dark corridors, moody Dredd, big fuck-off gun, leather uniform and body armour that looks functional and deadly. This one photo gives me a glimmer of hope that I'll finally get the Dredd movie I want.

Bryan Talbot

Dredd and Nemesis the Warlock artist

Hard to tell what it'll be like from one image. Hope he keeps the helmet on!

Pat Mills

creator of *2000 AD*

It's hard to judge from the photo, other than it's better and safer than the previous film's uniform. It looks like it's been significantly modified to look cooler and more rational, but I guess that was inevitable. I'm afraid I still carry a torch for the flamboyance and science fiction 'daring' quality of Ezquerra's original uniform design, which I can remember looking at and saying: "Wow! That's mind-blowing!" when it arrived in my office as I was starting *2000 AD*. I gather the screenplay's pretty cool, so looks like it's going to be a winner!

Carlos Ezquerra

Dredd co-creator

It looks right to me, but I can't judge it until I see more. [From] what I heard about the film, it looks like it's going to be better this time.

Al Ewing

Dredd writer

I quite like the more 'realistic' vibe – the padding, the black overtones, the giant shoulderpad reduced down to almost a decal. (It'll be interesting to see if there's a similar-sized eagle pad on the other side). The helmet remains unchanged, which is good – that red and black metal dome *is* Dredd's face – and like his comic face, it's battered, old and worn. Take that along with Urban's use of the old five-o-clock-shadow trope and we're looking at a Dredd who's as grizzled, bloody-minded and hard-bitten as the 70-year-old we read about every week – it'll be interesting to see if his performance bears that out.

Chris Weston*

Dredd artist

(*who may be joking...)

Wrong, wrong, wrong!

Where's the figure-hugging spandex? Or the Larry Blackmon-style codpiece? The movement-restricting armoured bling? I don't know what overpaid hack designed this modern version... but he obviously hasn't even bothered watching the original and classic *Judge Dredd* movie.

Far from looking like the pimped-out courier cyclist that Stallone portrayed, this character comes across as some kind of brutal, street-hardened biker-cop. All that leather and realistically proportioned padding! Just how on Earth will he get Hershey to fancy him in that battle-weathered get-up?

It all goes to suggest that this remake is just going to be some kind of violent, gritty and authentic version of what was clearly meant to be camp and cheesy.

And what's the point of hiring an unknown actor like Karl Urban to step into Sly's platform shoes? You can only get away with that kind of radical recasting when it's a character who doesn't show his face much... like Robocop, whose films undeniably inspired *Judge Dredd*.

As Dredd himself might say: "I find everyone involved guilty of not knowing their source material. Court's adjourned!"

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We're big fans of Sinestro's 'tache.

Fact file

Created by: Writer Bill Finger and artist Martin Nodell
Created for: All-American Publications (later DC Comics)
Currently owned by: DC Comics
First appearance: *All-American Comics* #16 (July 1940)
Real identity: Alan Scott, Hal Jordan, John Stewart, Guy Gardner, Kyle Rayner, Jade

www.downmagaz.com

Images © DC Comics

IN BLACKEST NIGHT...

With **Martin Campbell**'s big-screen *Green Lantern* almost here, it's time for DC Comic's intergalactic policeman to take his place alongside Batman and Superman. **Michael Molcher** charts the history of the character...

One of the longest-serving, if often peripheral, DC characters, Green Lantern evolved from a 1940s caped crime fighter wielding a magical ring into a post-war cadre of intergalactic policemen, establishing a convoluted continuity that flirted endlessly with cancellation but has now become one of DC's biggest characters.

There is a wonderfully over-the-top flamboyance to Finger and Nodell's colourful and popular Golden Age Green Lantern, engineer Alan Scott, who fashioned a ring from an ancient Chinese lantern carved out of the green 'Starheart' meteor. A founder member of the Justice Society of America, this magical masked crusader's combination of Fu Manchu eastern mysticism and Batman-like detection was a massive hit, but the post-war slump in superhero sales was his ultimate foe and the title was cancelled in 1949.

GREENHORN DAYS

A decade later, legendary DC editor Julius Schwartz, writer John Broome and artist Gil Kane resurrected him for *Showcase* #22 (1959) as part of the Green Lantern Corps, an interstellar police force whose members have their own 'patch' of space to protect. The idea owes much to 'super-science' epics such as E.E. 'Doc' Smith's *Lensmen* series, but is based on an idea Schwartz and Broome conceived years before in *Strange Adventures* #22 (1952).

Test pilot Hal Jordan became the Lantern of Sector 2814, which contains our planet, when mortally wounded Corps member Abin Sur sought a successor after crash-landing on Earth. »

Why can't they just get along already?

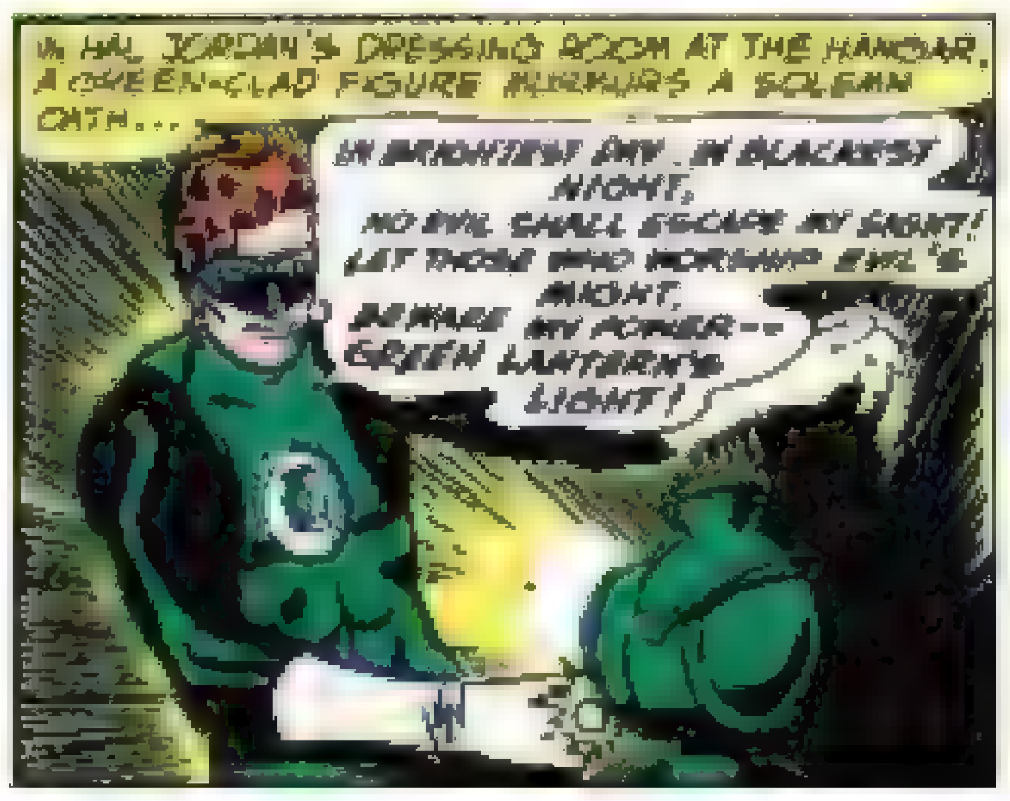
OATH

As revealed in the earliest days of the character, the Green Lantern recites an oath while recharging his ring. Originally, this went as follows:

"...and I shall shed my light
over dark evil.
For the dark things cannot
stand the light,
The light of the Green Lantern!"

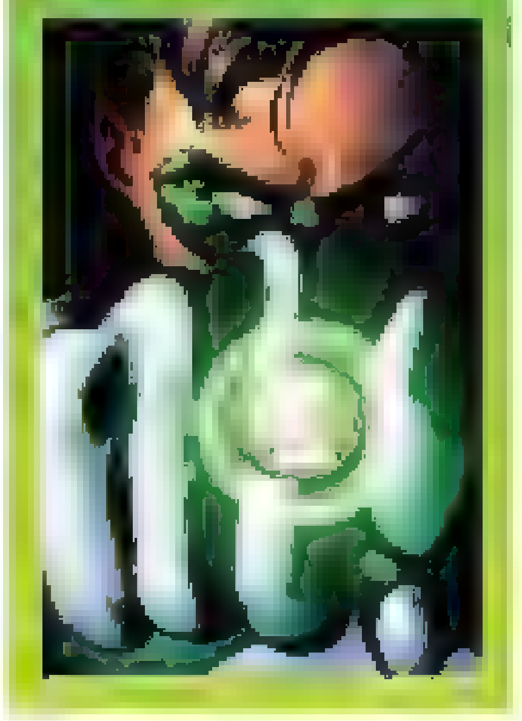
In the mid-1940s, this was changed into the verse made famous during the Hal Jordan era. It would go on to provide the titles for the mega-epic crossovers of recent years:

"In brightest day,
In blackest night,
No evil shall escape my sight.
Let those who worship
evil's might,
Beware my power...
Green Lantern's light!"


IN HAL JORDAN'S DRESSING ROOM AT THE HANGAR, A GREEN-CLAD FIGURE MURMURS A SOLEMN OATH...
IN BRIGHTEST DAY, IN BLACKEST NIGHT, NO EVIL SHALL ESCAPE MY SIGHT! LET THOSE WHO WORSHIP EVIL'S MIGHT, BEWARE MY POWER-- GREEN LANTERN'S LIGHT!

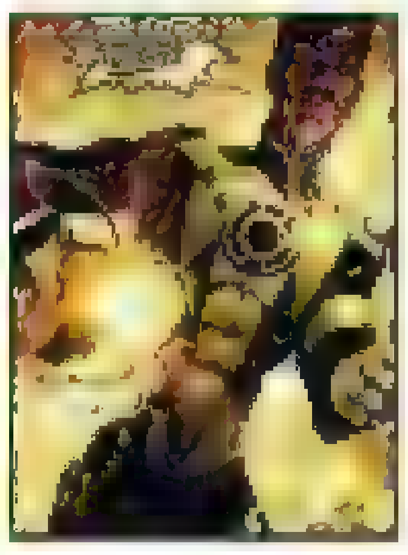
POWERS

Probably the most powerful and adaptable weapon in comic books, a Green Lantern's power ring is controlled by the wearer's willpower and limited only by their (or the scriptwriter's) imagination. Its effects range from simple flight and telepathy to the creation of 'solid energy' objects, time travel and [illegible]. The ring must be recharged by being pointed at a Lantern's Power Battery, [illegible]



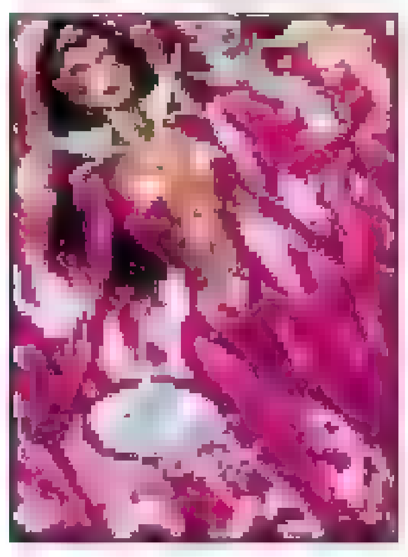
"LANTERN'S STORIES WERE UNUSUALLY NOT STAND-ALONE TALES, BUT OFTEN REFERENCED PREVIOUS ADVENTURES"

RECURRING ENEMIES

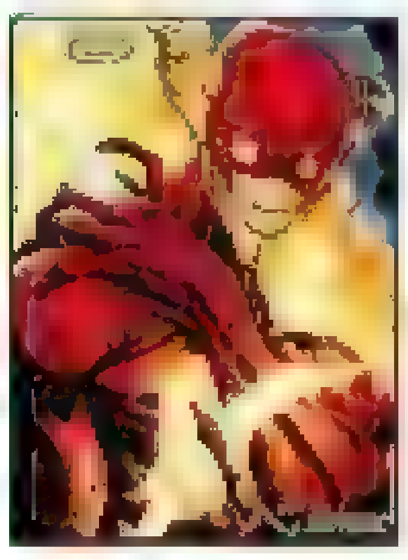


Sinestro
An arrogant former Corps member banished to the antimatter universe world of Qward. The Guardians' enemies, the Weaponers of Qward, promptly gave him a yellow power ring and sent him right back to seek revenge. With a name like 'Sinestro', the Guardians really should have seen this one coming

Star Sapphire

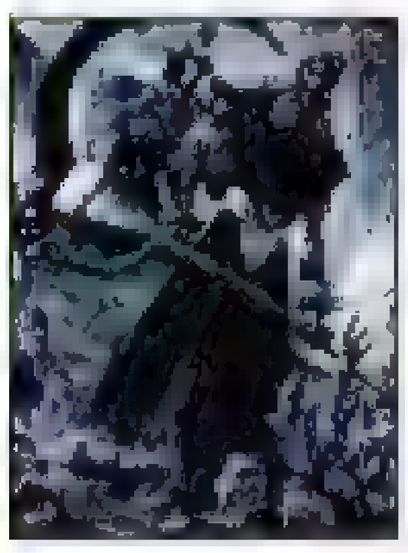


Hal Jordan's on-off lover, Carol Ferris, was one of those chosen by the immortal race of warrior women called the Zamarons to serve as a host body for their Queen. She fought Green Lantern for years before Jordan – as the Spectre – removed her Star Sapphire persona, but the presence then 'skipped' from woman to woman in bizarre romantic pursuit of him

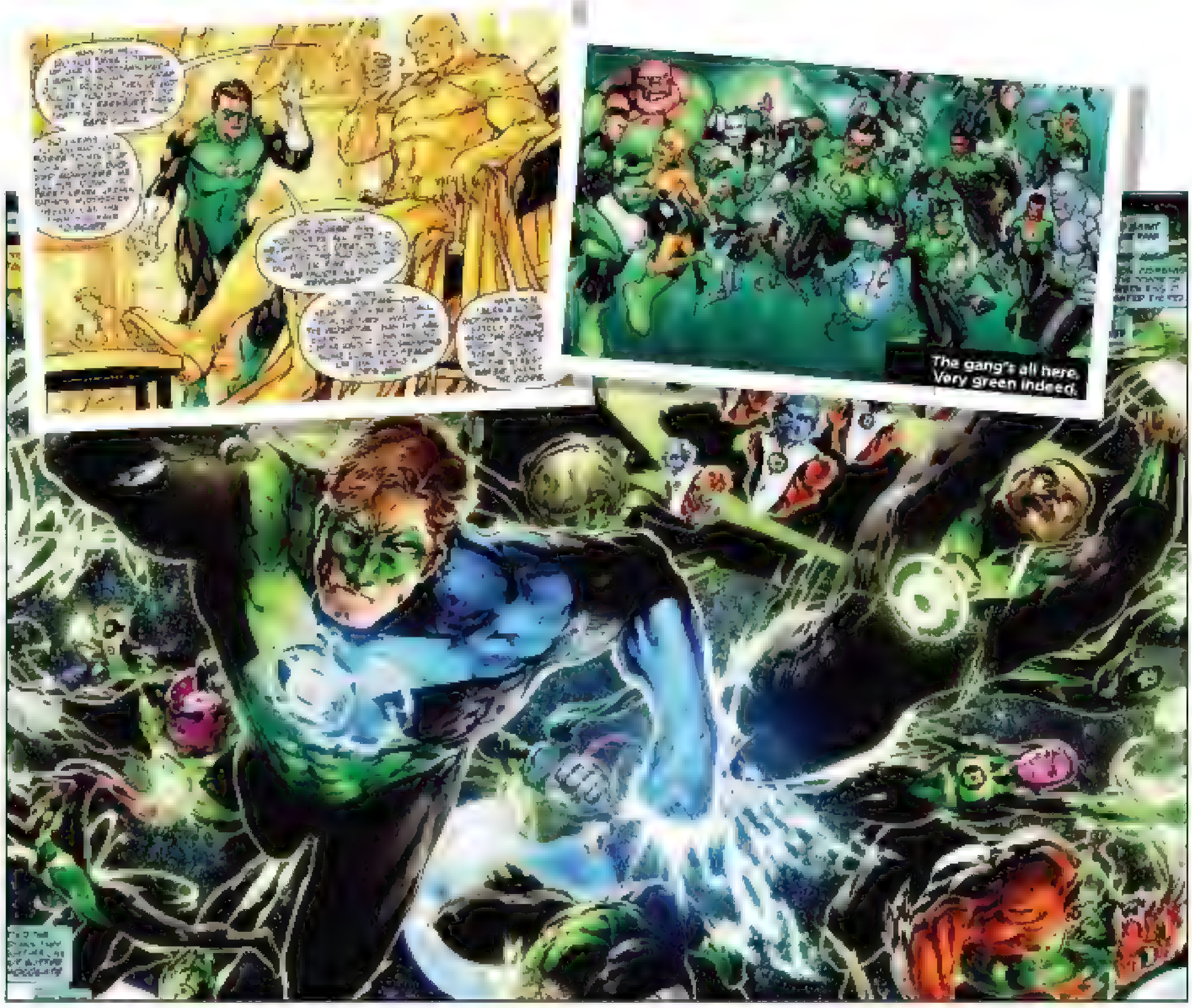


Parallax
This ancient parasite of 'pure evil' was trapped by the Guardians in the Central Power Battery and was the source of the Lanterns' weakness against yellow (the colour representing fear on the spectrum). It latched onto the enraged Jordan when he drained the Battery. Unable to corrupt Jordan, Sinestro had apparently woken Parallax and encouraged it to make the Lantern its host. After eventually freeing himself, Jordan led the Green Lanterns in a final conflict against Parallax, who was cut into four parts and imprisoned in each of the Earth Lanterns' power batteries.

Manhunters
The Guardians' first attempt at creating an interstellar police force, Manhunters became obsessed with the act of hunting criminals rather than seeing justice done. Eventually rebelling, their remaining members plot revenge against the Guardians and their replacements, the Lantern Corps.



Nekron
An embodiment of Death and expression of the darkness from the beginning of the universe, Nekron was a relatively minor villain when he first appeared in 1981, but was at the centre of the *Blackest Night* event almost 30 years later. Black power rings reanimated the dead as part of his plot to kill the Entity, the embodiment of all living things, but his plans were thwarted by an alliance of the other coloured ring corps and he was successfully returned to Purgatory



The gang's all here. Very green indeed.

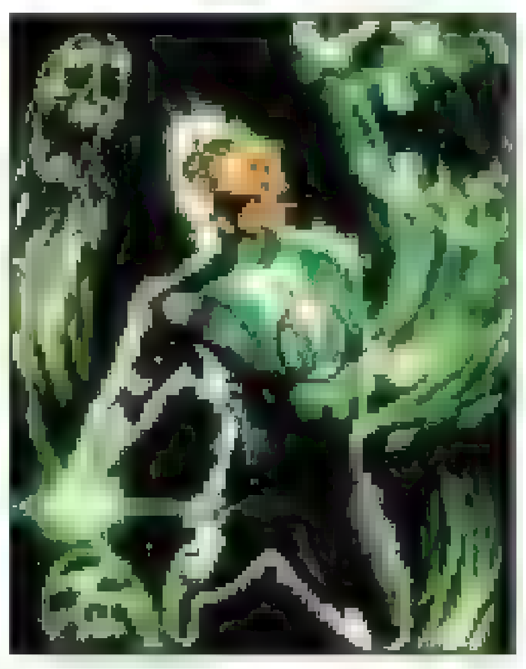
Whereas Scott's ring was magically powered, Jordan's energy originated from the Central Power Battery built by the Guardians of the Universe on the planet Oa, and he was now vulnerable only to the colour yellow. Green Lantern got his own title from 1960, with Broome and Kane's classic stories switching Jordan between Earth-bound crime fighting and grand extraterrestrial missions. At times silly, at others serious, Lantern's stories were unusually not stand-alone tales, but often referenced previous adventures. Broome grouped together stories thematically while Kane's dynamic art broke out of the usual six-panel page tradition. With issue #17, Gardner Fox joined Schwartz, Broome and Kane – a creative team that lasted until 1970.

ETHICALLY SOURCED

The first significant break for Lantern saw writer Denny O'Neil embark on a radical shift in direction in #66 (1970). Keen to tackle 'real' issues, O'Neil teamed Jordan up with Green Arrow, aka Oliver Queen, in a series of powerful, socially conscious and award-winning stories drawn by Neal Adams. The partnership fitted the spirit of the age – Jordan was the self-righteous lawman, Queen the liberal iconoclast – and this was new ground for DC. Used to peddling light fantasy, it now had a cosmic copper taking on slum pimps while Arrow's sidekick, Speedy, developed a heroin habit ("My ward is a junkie!" screamed the cover of *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* #86). Despite fantastic art, the preachy, often ludicrously earnest, run was a commercial flop, lasting only 14 issues, with Lantern forced to endure another of several cancellations.

When the title was revived, Jordan resigned from the Corps to be replaced by stand-in John Stewart – the first African-American superhero of the DC Universe. He supplanted Jordan's former back-up, the fractious and volatile redhead Guy Gardner, after Guy was left in a coma when his Power Battery exploded. The number of Lanterns increased to the point where the title briefly became *The Green Lantern Corps*, which came and went and is now a regular title. Jordan remained a returning but fringe feature, a support act in titles such as *Justice League of America* but one whose own popularity waxed and waned.

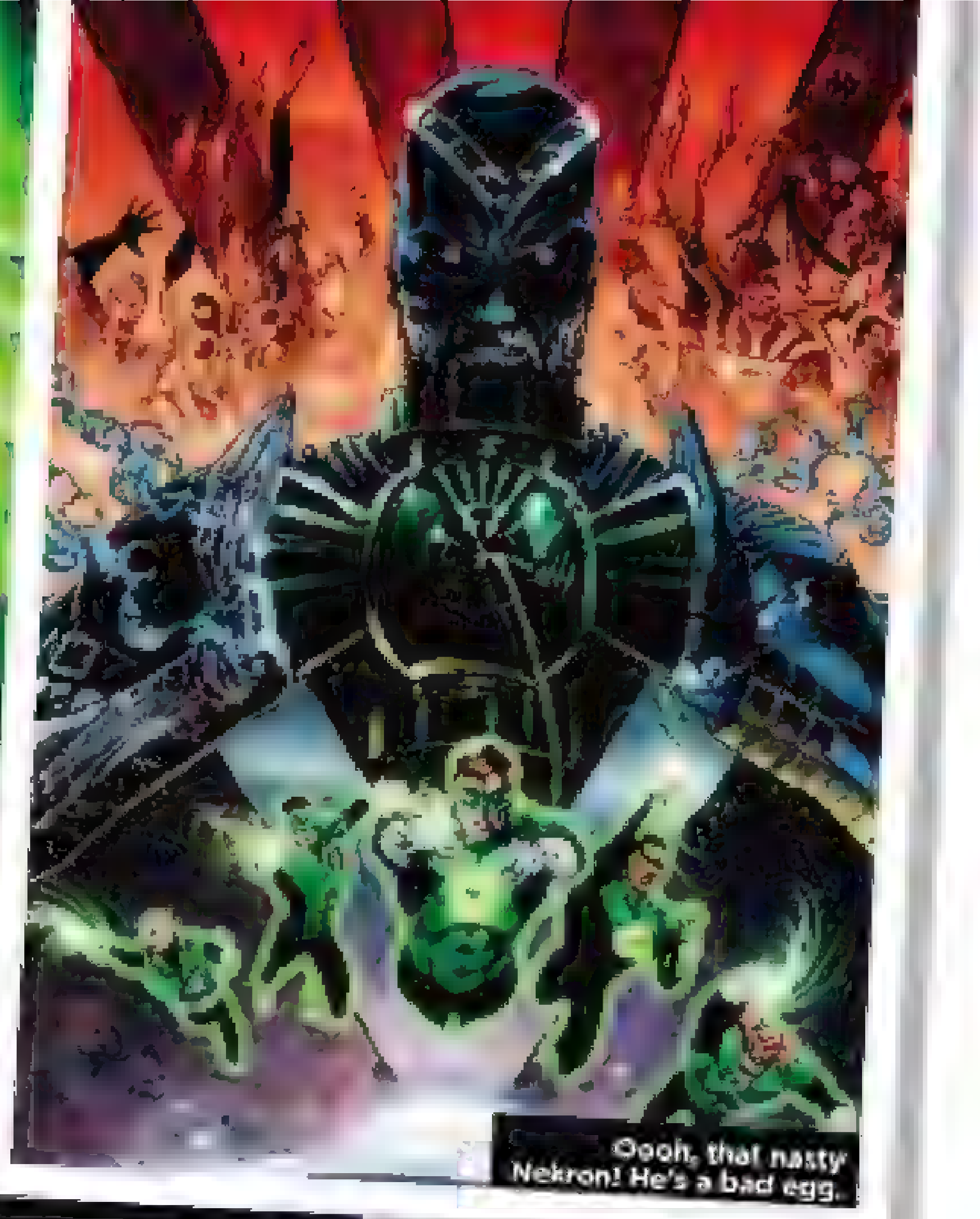
In 1994, with sales flagging again, Jordan's former home, Coast City, was obliterated by Mongul and Cyborg Superman. Enraged by the Guardians' refusal to let him resurrect the seven million inhabitants, Jordan apparently went insane, drained the Battery on Oa, obliterated the Corps and murdered all but one of the Guardians before becoming the powerful Parallax and trying to alter time to his liking. The remaining Guardian, Ganthet, rushed to Earth with the last power ring and bestowed it upon comic book artist Kyle Rayner – although diehard readers hated what they saw as Jordan's uncharacteristic flip-out.



GREEN LANTERN

GREEN LANTERN

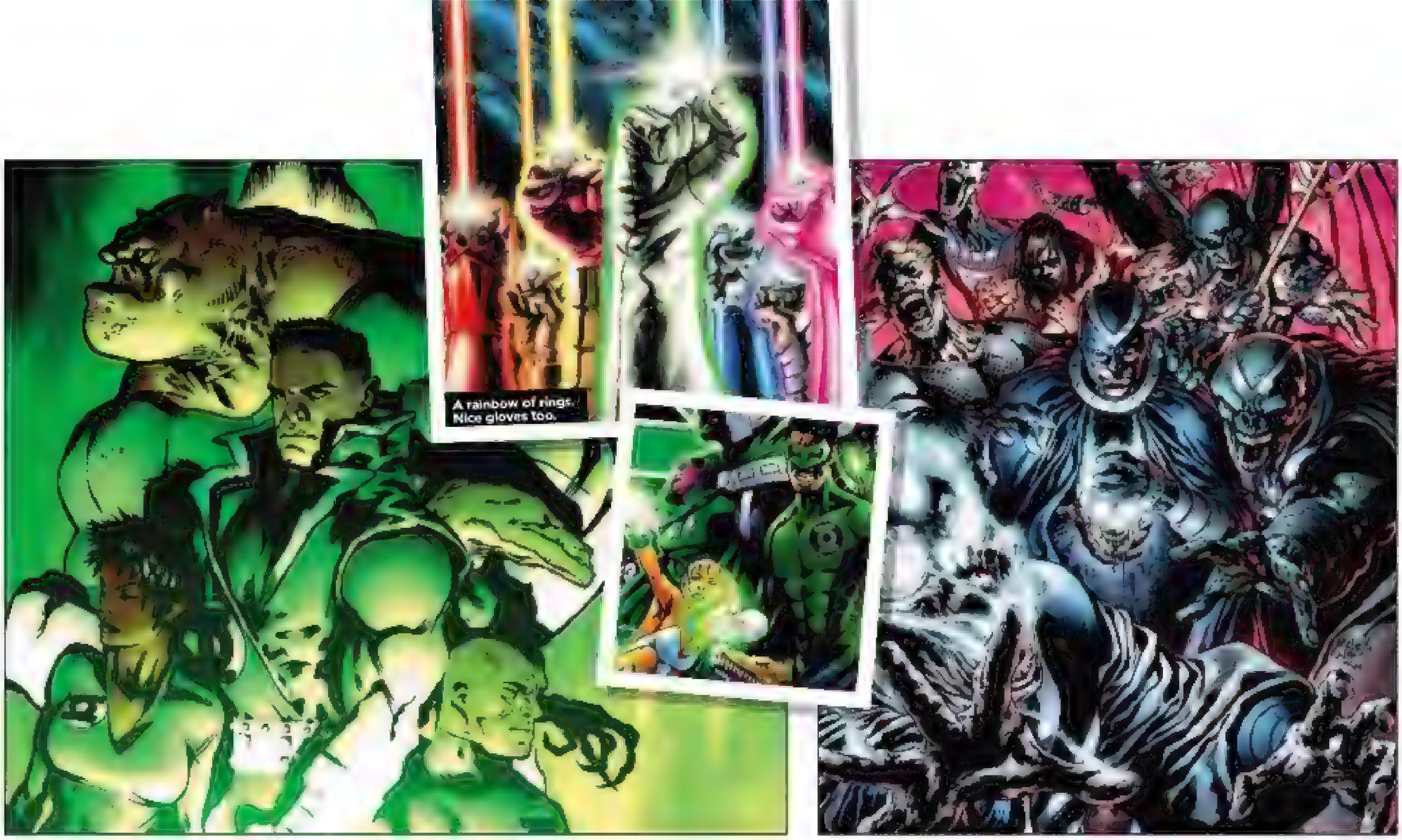
"THIS WAS NEW GROUND FOR DC: USED TO PEDDLING LIGHT FANTASY, IT NOW HAD A COSMIC COPPER TAKING ON SLUM PIMPS WHILE ARROW'S SIDEKICK, SPEEDY, DEVELOPED A HEROIN HABIT"



Oooh, that nasty Nekron! He's a bad egg.

CAREER LOW POINTS

When his love interest, Carol Ferris, jilted him for another man, Hal had a sulk of superhuman proportions, quit his job and stomped off to bum around the country in dead-end jobs. While angst suited Marvel's increasingly popular set of anti-heroes, this behaviour from the formerly noble Green Lantern just looked churlish. Then, in 1994 Alexandra DeWitt, Lantern Kyle Rayner's girlfriend, was murdered by the supervillain Major Force. Not an uncommon event in any superhero title, but it wasn't her death that was shocking so much as the manner of it – Rayner found her body stuffed into the refrigerator in their apartment. Although this then became a powerful motivating force in Rayner's character, the [illegible] remains glaringly incongruous and [illegible]



A rainbow of rings. Nice gloves too.

Created by writer Ron Marz and artist Darryl Banks, Rayner was a flawed hero who reignited the Battery – and sales figures – before defeating Parallax. Jordan later redeemed himself by sacrificing his life to revive the Earth's Sun, only to return from the grave in 1999 as the newest incarnation of the Spectre, although he was still 'infected' by Parallax. Rayner became the powerful being Ion, but was then infected with Parallax by Sinestro. Gardner at one time used Sinestro's own yellow power ring before discovering he was actually an alien, but then he wasn't. Then there's Scott's daughter and Kyle's ex, Jade, who briefly held the title before dying during the 'Infinite Crisis' storyline.

GAN-GREEN-OUS TALES

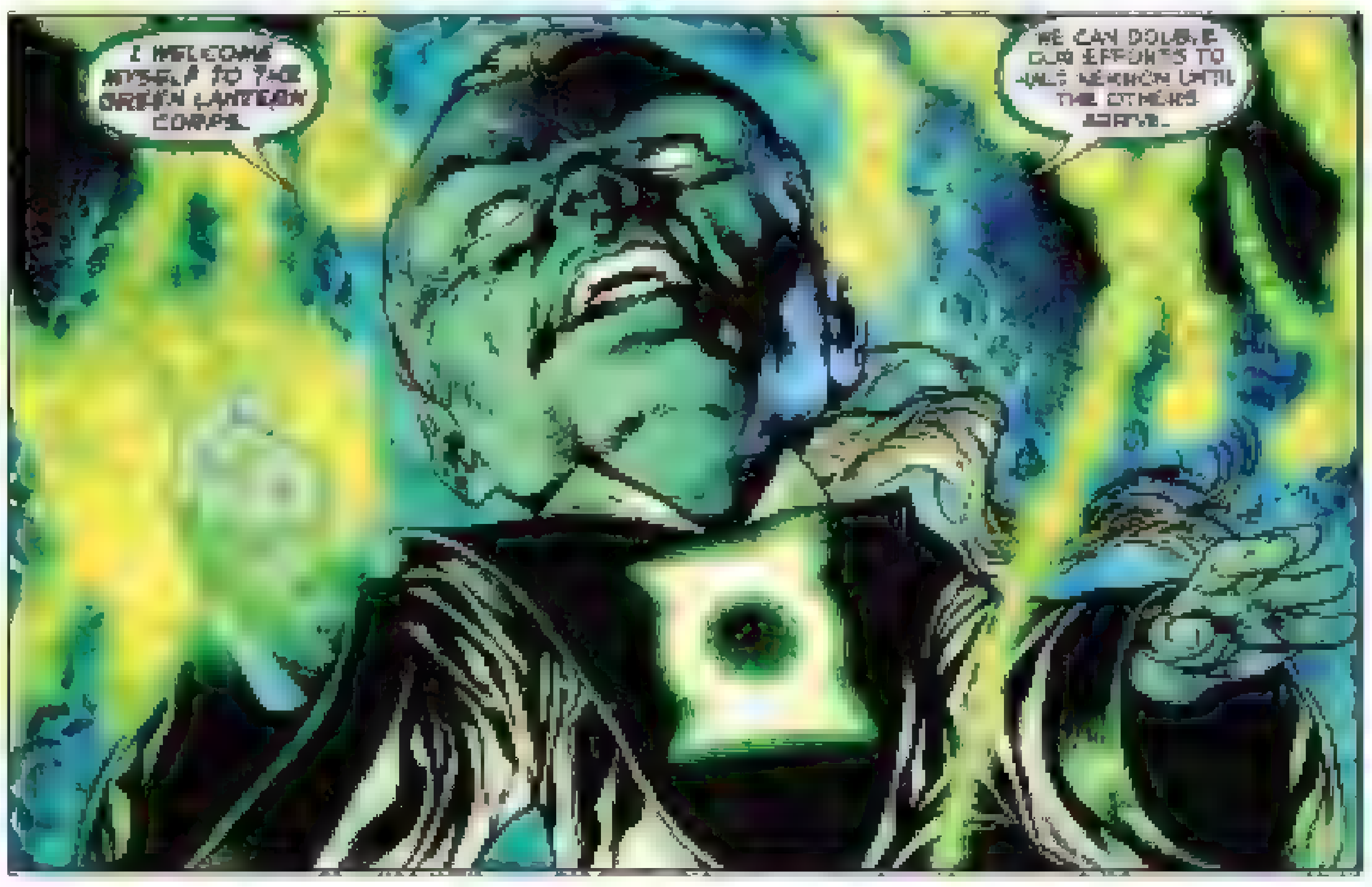
If this all seems a tad complicated, that's because it is. While other mainstay characters have been consistently refreshed, Green Lantern's interconnected past has remained virtually intact, leading to a bewildering Gordian Knot of mind-boggling continuity with up to four Earth-based Lanterns in circulation, some of them sporting two and even three separate personalities at any given time.

Since 2004, writer Geoff Johns has completely refreshed and rebooted the whole franchise. *Rebirth* saw Jordan overcome Parallax and return as Earth's main Green Lantern, while also introducing the concept of a 'spectrum' of rings representing different emotions, spanning from red for rage to orange for avarice and violet for love. Meanwhile, Darwyn Cooke's *DC: The New Frontier* provided probably the best interpretation of Green Lantern's origins for 40 years. Johns' massively successful follow-up, the 'Sinestro Corps War', took inspiration from a 1986 *Tales of the Green Lantern Corps* story by Alan Moore and saw Sinestro amass an army on Qward and wage all-out war on the Corps.

The third and final part of Johns' trilogy, *Blackest Night*, was a vast crossover event that arguably thrust the Green Lanterns into the A-list for the first time. In it, they thwarted Nekron, a physical embodiment of death, and his plot to kill all life in the universe. Black power rings created a Black Lantern Corps made up of the reanimated bodies of deceased heroes and villains from across the universe, including former Green Lantern Jade, powered by the corpse of the Anti-Monitor and led by the Black Hand. All seven colour-coded Corps, including Sinestro's lot, united to stop him in a storyline that involved all the major players in the DC universe. *Brightest Day*, the year-long follow-up across more than a dozen titles, is still charting the effects of *Blackest Night* and follows the previously deceased heroes as they attempt to understand the reasons behind their resurrection.

With the live-action Hollywood adaptation about to hit screens, Green Lantern has been thoroughly refreshed by Geoff Johns' loving reinvigoration – one of DC's oldest franchises has emerged from the sidelines and is finally playing second fiddle to no one.

> "THE GREEN LANTERNS THWARTED NEKRON, A PHYSICAL EMBODIMENT OF DEATH, AND HIS PLOT TO KILL ALL LIFE IN THE UNIVERSE"


I WELCOME MYSELF TO THE GREEN LANTERN CORPS.
WE CAN DOUBLE OUR EFFORTS TO HALT NEKRON UNTIL THE OTHERS ARRIVE.

SCREEN APPEARANCES

The Superman/Aquaman Hour of Adventure (1967)
Gerald Mohr
Green Lantern undertook both solo adventures and appeared in team stories in his first animated appearance.

Super Friends (1977-1985)
Michael Rye
Lantern was an occasional supporting character in the long-running Hanna-Barbera animated series

Legends of the Superheroes TV specials (1979)
Howard Murphy
He became a leading figure in the quite bizarre live-action series of Hanna-Barbera TV specials. Notably, the role of Sinestro was played by comedian Charlie Callas

Justice League/Justice League Unlimited (2001-2006)
Phil LaMarr
The John Stewart incarnation of Green Lantern appears as a former US Marine here. There was consternation among some Americans, for whom this version of Stewart has been their only exposure to Green Lantern, when Ryan Reynolds was cast in the title role of the forthcoming live-action movie

Justice League of America (1997)
Matthew Settle
An amalgam of the various Green Lanterns made an appearance in this thankfully unsuccessful live-action television series pilot.

Green Lantern: First Flight (2009)
Christopher Meloni
This direct-to-video animation is fifth in the lineage of DC Universe Original Animated Movies. It retells the origin story of Hal Jordan, and has received generally positive reviews.

Green Lantern
Ryan Reynolds
The first silver screen outing for the Lantern is due for release later this year.

TRIVIA

The original Green Lantern's bizarre weakness was 'objects made of wood'.

Thanks to Alan Moore, members of the Green Lantern Corps include a virus, a planet and a mathematical progression.

The first Lantern's alter ego was going to be Alan Ladd, a twist on Aladdin – who also had a magic lamp and ring.

Ol' smoothie Guy Gardner once took fellow Justice League member Ice on a date to a porno.

After years of exposure to his powers, Alan Scott's body is now composed entirely of the Starheart's energy, with his appearance and health entirely dependent on his willpower.

Scott's sidekick was cab driver Doiby Dickles. Against type, he ended up marrying alien Princess Ramia and becoming king of her planet, Myrg.

Daffy Duck as Duck Dodgers, once became 'The Green Lantoon' after accidentally picking up Hal Jordan's laundry.

After Jordan-as-Parallax had destroyed the Corps, Gardner then discovered he had the genes of an extinct alien race, which granted him incredible powers. These included the ability to transform any part of his body into a weapon.

Original Latern artist Martin Nodell also helped to create the Pillsbury Doughboy in the 1960s.

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THE GREEN LANTERN
Introducing THE GREEN LANTERN!

1

SHOWCASE presents
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Featuring "MENACE OF THE RUNAWAY MISSILE!"

2

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3

GREEN LANTERN
EMERALD TWILIGHT NEW DAWN

4

TEN ESSENTIAL
Green Lantern Stories

Not 11, not nine, but ten bits of jade greatness. By **James Hunt**

Created in 1940 by Bill Finger and Martin Nodell to appear in the pages of *All American Comics*, *Green Lantern* has since become one of DC's most enduring superhero franchises. While the character never quite hit the wider popularity of contemporaries such as Wonder Woman, the forthcoming movie promises to change that in a big way. In anticipation, *Comic Heroes* shines a light on some of the essential *Green Lantern* stories from the last 70 years...

1 Golden Age

The Golden Age Green Lantern Archives Vol.1 (collects material from *All American Comics* #16-30 and *Green Lantern* Vol.1 #1)

Hal Jordan might be the best known Green Lantern, but Alan Scott was the '40s original. With a ring powered by magic and utterly useless against wood, he was quite different to more modern incarnations. These stories originated the name, visuals and power restrictions that remain a central part of the mythos today, while Scott is still around as a member of the Justice Society of America. His story – and the Green Lantern's – begins here.

2 The Origin Of Hal Jordan

Green Lantern Chronicles (collects *Showcase* #22-24, *Green Lantern* Vol.2 #1-3)

Ten years after the original Green Lantern ceased publication, this 1959 revival gave the character a sci-fi inspired makeover, introducing galactic police force the Green Lantern Corps and replacing boring old Alan Scott with daring test pilot Hal Jordan. The character was a hit, and these early issues laid out the mythology that would define the Green Lantern for decades, regardless of who wore the ring.

3 Mogo Doesn't Socialize

Green Lantern Vol.2 #188 (available in *DC Universe: The Stories Of Alan Moore*)

Back when Alan Moore was still fresh-faced and wide-eyed, he and *Watchmen* collaborator Dave Gibbons produced a backup strip for a 1985 issue of *Green Lantern*, which brought a typically Moore-ish perspective to the Corps' membership. It might only be six pages long, but it's a gem of a story that demonstrates the true scope of *Green Lantern*'s universe and introduces Mogo, one of the more offbeat Green Lanterns. You'll need to read it to understand why.

4 Emerald Twilight, New Dawn/Final Night

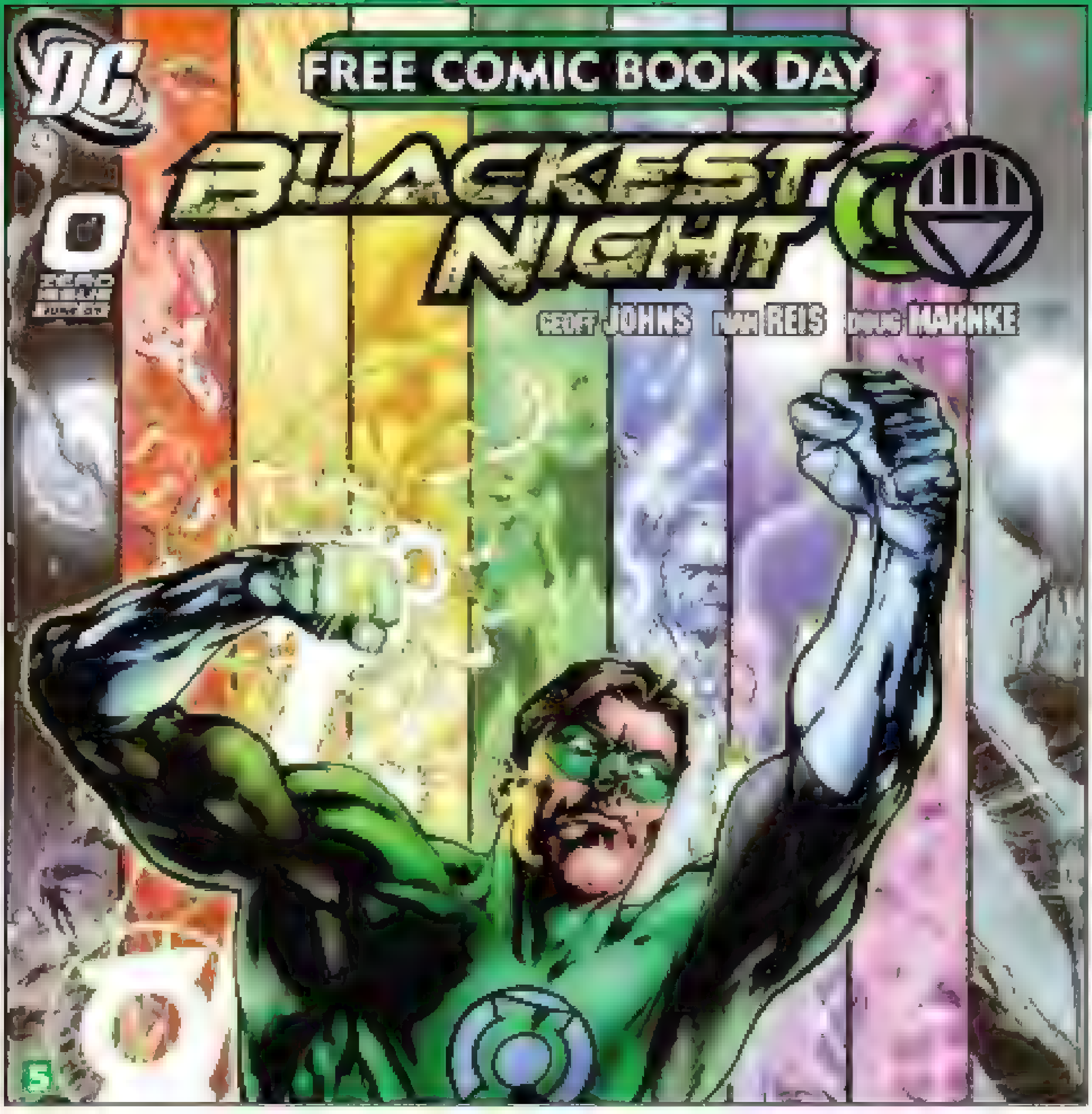
Emerald Twilight, New Dawn/Final Night TPBs (collects *Green Lantern* Vol.2 #48-55/ *Final Night* #1-4)

When Coast City is destroyed, Hal Jordan goes mad. Attacking the Guardians, he absorbs the energy in the central power battery, takes the name Parallax and wipes out the entire Green Lantern Corps. Elsewhere, the last remaining power ring is given to Kyle Rayner, an illustrator on Earth who becomes the new Green Lantern – and the final one, following Hal's death. The story split fans down the middle, but Rayner went on to serve as Green Lantern for a decade, remaining active today.

5 Blackest Night

Blackest Night HC (collects *Blackest Night* #0-8)

Under the auspices of Geoff Johns, DC's latest crossover event places the Green Lantern mythology at its very centre, as the "blackest night" alluded to in the Green Lantern oath finally arrives. When the Black Lanterns attempt to eradicate all life, only the assembled Lantern Corps can stop them. Involving virtually every major DC Universe character, *Blackest Night* is the kind of sprawling, blockbuster epic that can only be told in comics and seems bound to shape the Green Lantern's world – and the wider DC Universe – for years to come.



GREEN LANTERN
GREEN ARROW
6

GREEN LANTERN
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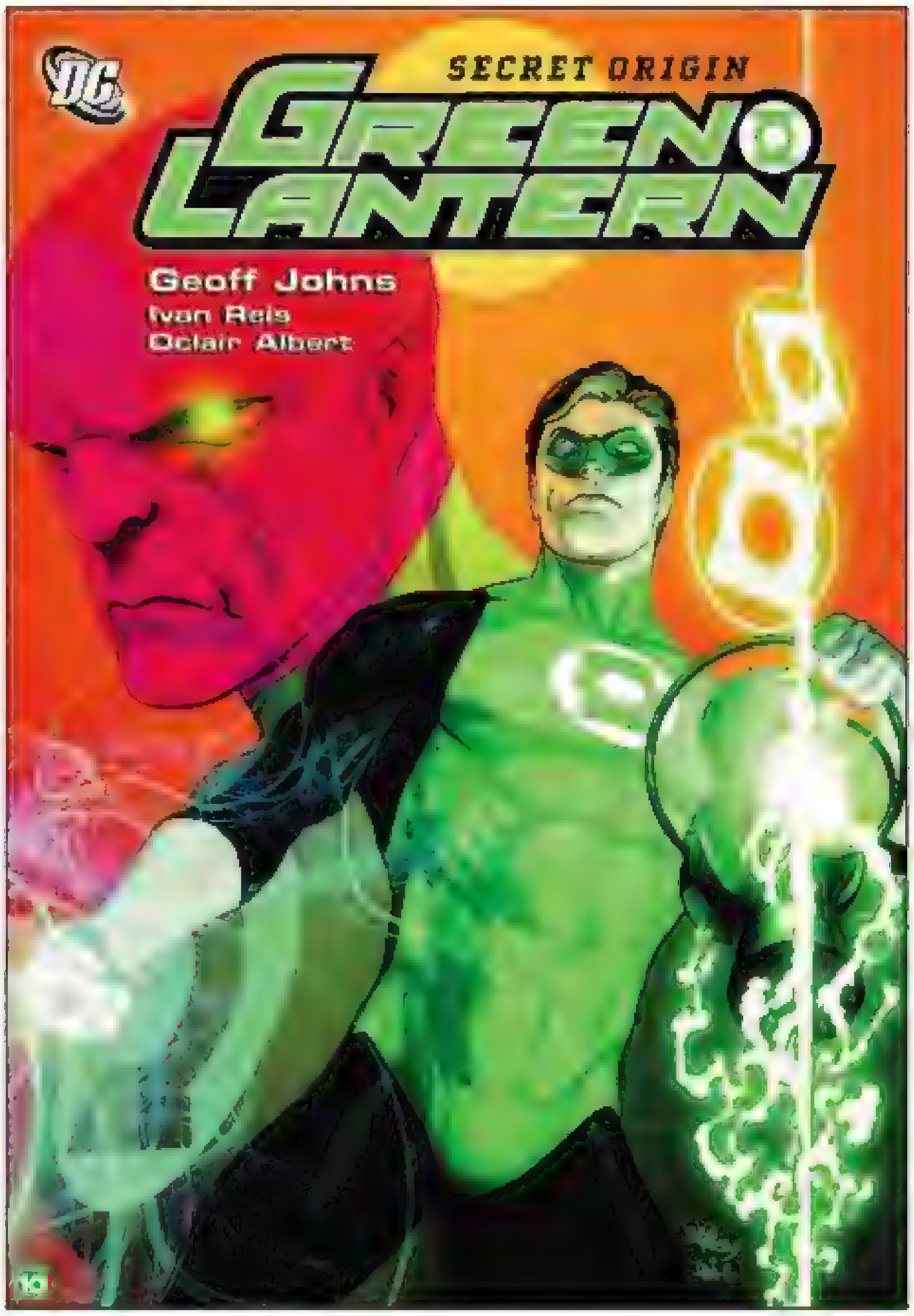

DC
GREEN LANTERN
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GREEN LANTERN
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6 Hard-Travelling Heroes

Green Lantern/Green Arrow Vol.1 & 2 (collects *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* #76-89)

In the '70s, Denny O'Neill and Neal Adams teamed Hal Jordan with Ollie Queen, then sent the pair on a US road trip, putting them face to face with the social issues affecting the country. Although slightly dated by modern standards, back then it was revolutionary. As well as featuring the infamous story in which Green Arrow's sidekick Speedy is discovered to be a drug addict, this run also introduced John Stewart, one of DC's earliest black superheroes and the resident Green Lantern of the *Justice League Unlimited* cartoon.

7 Emerald Knights

Emerald Knights TPB (collects *Green Lantern* Vol.3 #99-106, *Green Arrow* Vol.2 #136)

Teaming up Kyle Rayner with a pre-Parallax Hal Jordan, *Emerald Knights* was largely penned by Ron Marz, Rayner's creator and undeniably the character's definitive writer. *Emerald Knights* gave Rayner a chance to truly accept himself as the heir to the Green Lantern name, and also allowed Hal to come to terms with his fate. Although hated by Jordan's irate fans at the time, it's more fondly remembered now that Hal is back for good.

8 Hate Crimes

Green Lantern Vol.3 #154-155 (available in *Green Lantern: Brother's Keeper* TPB)

In 2001, writer Judd Winick won a GLAAD (Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation) award for an issue of *Green Lantern* in which supporting character Terry Berg came out. The next year, he again received the accoloade for a storyline that dealt with a homophobic attack on Terry. Continuing the tradition set by Denny O'Neill, Winick used *Green Lantern* to cover issues previously considered outside the domain of comics. It's worth reading for that reason alone.

9 Rebirth

Green Lantern: Rebirth TPB (collects *Green Lantern: Rebirth* #1-6)

It took ten years, but Hal Jordan fans finally got their way when the character was restored to the position of Earth's Green Lantern following an unsuccessful attempt to recast as him as 'spirit of vengeance' The Spectre. As well as resurrecting the Green Lantern Corps and introducing the 'emotional spectrum' that became the heart of *Blackest Night*, *Rebirth* also retconned the events of *Final Night*. This explained that Parallax was a fear entity that created terror in anything it came into contact with and had possessed Hal.

10 Secret Origin

Green Lantern: Secret Origin TPB (collects *Green Lantern* Vol.4 #29-35)

Described by Ryan Reynolds as the bible for the forthcoming movie, this mini-series retells the origin of Hal Jordan, incorporating all of the elements introduced into the Green Lantern mythos since 1959 to create a new 'official' version. Written by Geoff Johns, whose work on *Green Lantern* and the DCU helped propel him to the very top of DC Comics, it's easily the most definitive and self-contained version of the superhero's story. If you only read one tale out of the ones we've summarised here, make it this one.

"I THINK GREEN LANTERN'S GOING TO BE AROUND IN ITS CURRENT FORM FOR SOME TIME TO COME"

The Man Behind the LANTERN

www.downmagaz.com

Few Artists have as much history with the Green Lantern as **Dave Gibbons** – he not only worked with the legendary Len Wein in the mid '80s, but also wrote *Green Lantern: Recharge* in 2006. He talked to **Michael Molcher** about prefects burning comics, soap operas and giant green boxing gloves

GREEN LANTERN

GREEN LANTERN

GREEN LANTERN CORPS

COMIC HEROES: As a kid you had a complete run of the first 100 *Green Lantern* issues – what was so appealing about the character?

DAVE GIBBONS: I was a DC comics guy when I grew up and loved everything that Julie Schwartz edited – I liked the kind of optimistic and scientific clear tone of his comics, and the nice clean artwork as well. I just loved the idea of this kind of intergalactic police force. I've got a vivid memory of school when the prefects confiscated comics from people's desks. One of them brought out a big pile of comics and on top was *Green Lantern* #6 – the first appearance of Tomar-Re. It was a really horrible thing – not only that they were burning comics, but that they burned one that I'd never seen!

A bit later on, I saw an issue of *GL* – a story called 'Prince Peril's Power Play' – and on the front was our Green Lantern fighting some kind of Thor-type character and lying on the floor was the fallen Golden Age Green Lantern. This was the days of the rather jazzy covers that DC used to have and it caught my eye when I was in the newsagents, buying a packet of cigarettes. I just had to pick it up – and that was the issue that got me back into comics again.

By LEN WEIN and DAVE GIBBONS
GREEN LANTERN
THE DEADLY DEMOLITION TEAM IS HERE PUNKS!
BUT WHERE'S GREEN LANTERN?

All the way through my growing up, *Green Lantern* had something to offer me and was, on one occasion, a real pivotal moment in my story.

CH: How did you come to work on the series? You were part of the original 'British Invasion' in the '80s but ended up drawing *Green Lantern* back-up strips...

DG: DC came to England recruiting people to work on their comics; I think they had it in their minds to get me to draw *Star Trek* because they'd seen me draw *Dan Dare* and the fact that I'd drawn *Doctor Who* showed I could draw likenesses. I would have hated to draw *Star Trek*, having to draw loads of likenesses of loads of characters. So they didn't really know what to do with me and offered me back-up strips. I remember them actually telling me – after they'd recruited me – that if I did a good job they might have regular work for me, which was a classic case of the right hand not knowing what the left hand was doing. [Eventually] Len phoned me up and offered me the main strip, which was fantastic. I thought I'd only wanted to do it for a year – I just fancied the idea of seeing what it felt like to be a DC comics artist.

CH: Your *GL* stories were actually quite down-to-earth – would you have been happier drawing epic space battles? Where does the character work best?

DG: Also, as it turned out, the kind of stories [Len] was writing at the time – and obviously Len is one of the comic book greats – were pretty down-to-earth, like soap operas. I seemed to end up drawing a lot of Carol Ferris and Hal Jordan arguing in the parking lot and not a lot of the planet Oa and the outer space stuff, which is what I was really interested in and what I wanted to do. So when it came to the end of the year I made my apologies. But it was also at that point that Alan Moore and I started talking about *Watchmen*.

Len and I both had similar visions of the character, but I think the kind of stories that were in vogue at the time and which Len wanted to write, weren't the ones that I wanted to draw.

I think the character works best with the accent on outer space and the weird and wonderful, but his life on Earth is an important part of the character and what makes Hal Jordan one of the great Green Lanterns.

CH: Lantern's been cancelled several times but has always returned – what keeps bringing him back?

DG: The vogue now is towards epic stuff, informed by things like *Star Wars* and *Lord of the Rings*, and the background to *Green Lantern* means there's this huge universe filled with the battle between good and evil, so it's the perfect stage for epic battles. And also the mythology ties the Guardians into the very beginnings of the DC Universe, which means whenever you do an imprint-wide team-up the Corps are an intrinsic part of it.

CH: What did you think of the more recent Green Lantern and Geoff Johns' work?

DG: I've really loved the recent Green Lantern stories and it was great to have a little bit of a hand in the beginning stages of what it's come to be. I really enjoyed writing *Green Lantern Corps* and I was lucky to have Patrick Gleason – he really made my writing look good. Geoff has got such a wonderful grasp of these characters, he really understands what makes them work and Ivan Reis draws this cosmic stuff and casts of thousands in such a powerful way – he's easily the equal of what Kirby used to do in his day or Neal Adams did in his. They're such an exciting team. I think *Green Lantern*'s going to be around in its current form for some time to come.

CH: Okay, you're a Green Lantern facing a gigantic alien foe – what do you materialise with your ring to defeat him?

DG: Obviously, it has to be a giant green boxing glove... ▭

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Darkest Hour

Tradition has it there are 3,600 ring-wielders out there. It also states that we owe you ten reasons why the new *Green Lantern* movie will rock. Blake Lively, don't make liars of us! By Matt Bielby

This is a funny superhero summer, kicking off with a Shakespeare-spouting god and finishing with a He-Man of the 'Greatest Generation'. Sandwiched between them there's this guy. DC's offering is a square-jawed test pilot who normally comes across as even stiffer than Cap, but here appears to have been retro-fitted as a smart-arsed '80s action hero.

Indeed, the new Green Lantern is perhaps best understood as a compilation of the various guys who've worn the ring over the years. He boasts straight-shooter Hal Jordan's name and job but is spliced with Kyle Rayner's rookie qualities and Guy Gardner's attitude. Only John Stewart is missing – but, then, black and angry is a bit much to expect of even an on-fire Ryan Reynolds. To put it another way, he's Maverick in a CGI spacesuit.

The Silver Age, Hal Jordan version of Green Lantern who first appeared in 1959 – he took his name and powers from an earlier hero, one sometimes written by sci-fi great Alfred Bester – was a confident suburban playboy, with a British sports car and middle-class optimism. A cousin to 007, Don Draper, Paul Newman and JFK, he was entrusted with a miracle-performing power ring by a dying alien. Its companion recharger happened to be shaped like an old railroad lamp, a hangover from the Bester days. He was then drafted into an intergalactic police force, the Green Lantern Corps, bank-rolled by blue-skinned space dwarves called the Guardians of the Universe.

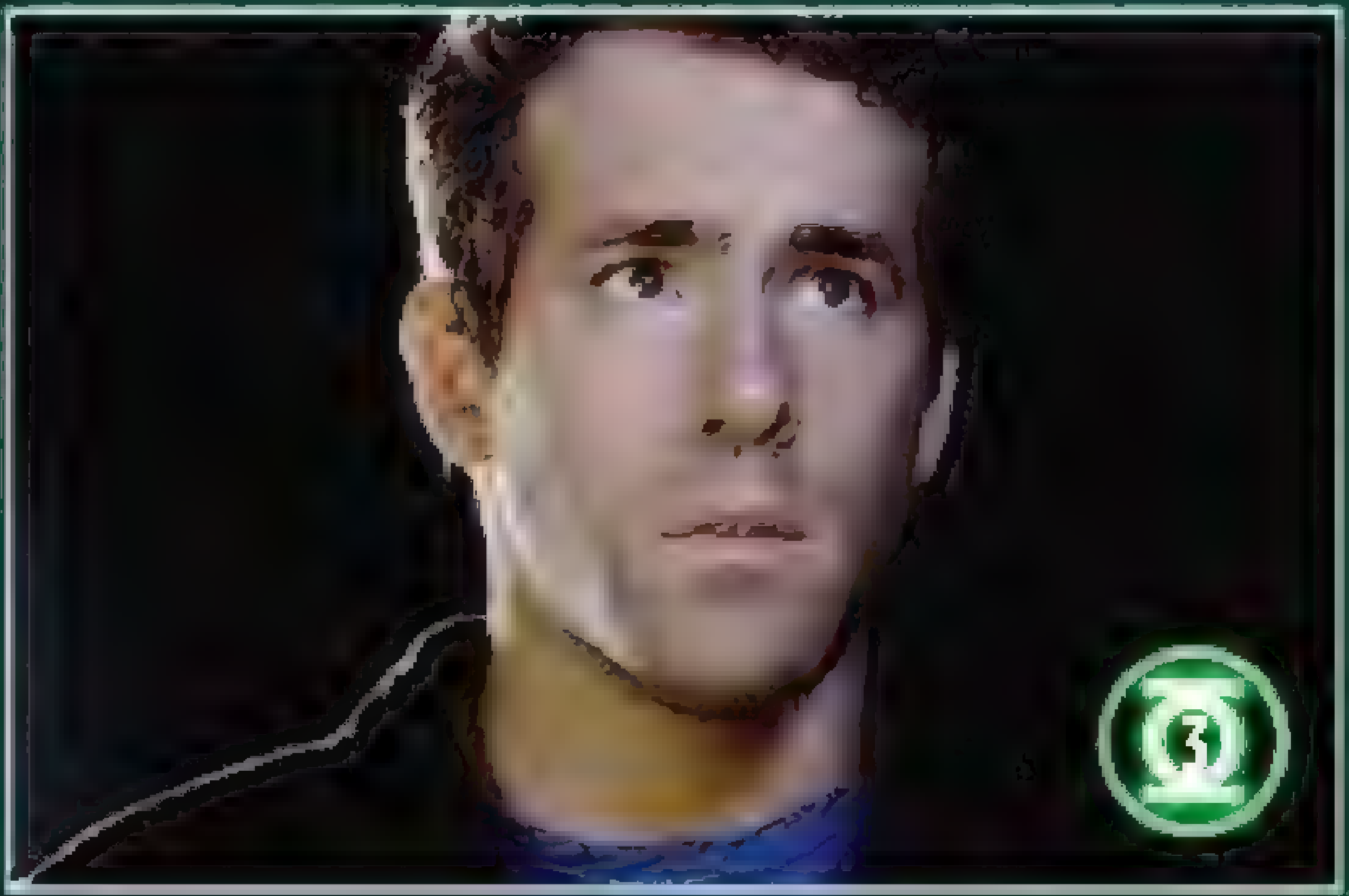
Throughout the '60s, *Green Lantern* benefited from the sure touch of its creators: writer John Broome knew when to temper his ambitious sci-fi epics with light-hearted fun, while the smooth athleticism and punchy cinematic layouts of Gil Kane's art regularly made it the best-looking comic on the shelves.

Among older readers, in particular, Green Lantern was a smash hit. For a while, he was the most popular DC character, comfortably knocking Superman and Batman out of the park. It couldn't last, of course; with the '70s came doubts and a mistrust of authority. This establishment space cop descended into a cycle of humiliation, first as the constant fall guy in the gorgeous but shrill Neal Adams and Denny O'Neil *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* run, then regularly replaced or – more recently – turned into a universe-threatening monster.

But with such a rich history to choose from, what have they cherry-picked for the movie? »

1 GREEN LANTERN TAKES SUPERHEROES TO THE STARS

Like your heroics with a *Star Wars* vibe? The nature of Green Lantern's powers, origin and status in the universe gave him a far vaster playground than the likes of Superman or the Flash, regularly drawing him to the far future, distant planets and other dimensions. Our hero's weapon can do anything? Well, okay, so can those of the villains, because they can come from anywhere. The first nine issues of the comic, running through most of the 1960s, are among the most impressive sustained sequences the medium has ever managed, heaping invention on invention as they introduce the Green Lantern Corps, the godlike Guardians, rogue Green Lantern Sinestro and more. The film could do far, far worse than try to emulate that.



2 HEROES DON'T HAVE TO BE LONERS

One of the tragedies of the DCU has been its tendency to make everyone a little bit Batman, binning too much of the cheesy craziness that made each character unique in favour of a parade of vengeful, friendless tough guys. But Hal was always too well-adjusted for that – he had friends, family and a job. One of the cheering things about *Green Lantern*'s cast is that we don't just meet Hal's dad, but his brothers and assorted other Jordans too.

3 RYAN REYNOLDS HAS SOMETHING TO PROVE

Many balked at his casting: Hal Jordan was going to be played by that ripped, charming guy from all those so-so comedies – things like *Just Friends* and *Van Wilder: Party Liaison*? But Reynolds takes himself more seriously than you might think, and in recent years has been methodically turning himself into a genuine movie star-in-waiting. Don't believe us? Check out his turn in the well-received *Buried* – an hour and a half of a guy in a box – if you doubt his acting chops. And he's always got his more-likeable-than-a-guy-that-hunky-should-be thing going on. He may have filed for divorce from Scarlett Johansson, but in every other way we suspect 2011 will belong to Reynolds.

4 MARTIN CAMPBELL IS KING OF THE REVAMPS

New Zealand-born director Campbell has proved to be a safe hand in the past, with two major revamps of the James Bond franchise among a career filled with professionally crafted action flicks. He seems to be channelling '80s Tony Scott with his version of *Green Lantern*. The recklessly irresponsible hero we see in the trailer – warehouse apartment, random hook-ups, orange muscle car – ticks all the peak-period

www.downma

DC
GREEN LANTERN
EMERALD DAWN
1
7

Tom Cruise boxes so neatly it plays like parody. Except that Reynolds brings an unexpected warmth and self-doubt to the character. This Hal may be decidedly non-canon, but we expect Campbell to make all the right moves.

5 IT'S A MONSTER'S BALL

Part of the fun of *Green Lantern* has always been the assorted crazy-looking members of the Corps – intelligent plants, walking fish, whatever Broome and Kane could think of. And from the look of the scenes set on Oa, the Guardians' homeworld, we won't be short-changed here. There's Kilowog (the Hulk-sized bruiser with an unfortunate name), Tomar-Re (a sort of orange sea parrot), G'Hu (chief feature: two tails growing out of his head) and Abin Sur (the dying Lantern who first meets Hal, his face like Robbie Williams's at the end of *Rock DJ*) for certain. We've got our fingers crossed for G'nort, the useless dog one, too.

6 PIEFACE

Except he's not called that, of course. Although quite a dignified character, friendly Inuit plane mechanic Thomas Kalmaku (played by New Zealander Taika Waititi in the new movie) was lumbered with this borderline-racist nickname throughout the '60s. Campbell likes his Kiwi actors – Temuera Morrison shows up as Abin Sur – but there are some Hollywood heavyweights on board, too. Not least Angela Bassett as Amanda Waller, DC's slightly evil answer to Nick Fury, and the mighty Tim Robbins.

7 THE WRITERS KNOW THEIR COMICS

After assorted aborted stabs at it, Greg Berlanti (best known for his TV work on shows such as *Dawson's Creek*, *Everwood* and *Eli Stone*) dragged in television and comics writers Marc Guggenheim and Michael Green to start again from scratch. Their script references everything from the Adams/O'Neil years to the more recent *Emerald Dawn* mini-series and more. It's hard to think of a major *Green Lantern* element they haven't ticked off; fan-service is pretty much guaranteed.

8 BLAKE LIVELY IS BETTER THAN YOU MIGHT THINK

If fans were unsure about Reynolds, they hated the casting of shockingly young *Gossip Girl* poppet Blake Lively as Carol Ferris, boss of a Lockheed-like plane-maker (and, in the movie version, Hal's fellow test pilot). Her flat delivery in the trailer didn't help. But wait. Let's give the girl a chance – after all, she did earn good notices for her turn as a drug-addled floozy in Ben Affleck's *The Town*. Anyway, her presence can hardly be the worst indignity forced on poor Carol – she periodically turns into the villain Star Sapphire, and spent much of the '70s in a wheelchair.

9 BAD GUYS ARE OUT IN FORCE

Since strict military mentor-type Sinestro needs a little time to get up to speed, *Green Lantern* isn't afraid to pile on the extra villains. There's Parallax, a yellow parasite that's the embodiment of terror, and Hector Hammond, a codename-free human scientist from the Broome days played by Peter Sarsgaard. Here he suffers from a nasty space infection that gives him mighty telepathic powers while warping his body horribly. Too many moral reprobates? Let's hope not. One thing especially cheers us: we're told this isn't your typical origins tale, and that we get into the actual adventure right away, not at the end of the second act. If only all superhero flicks were based on that concept...

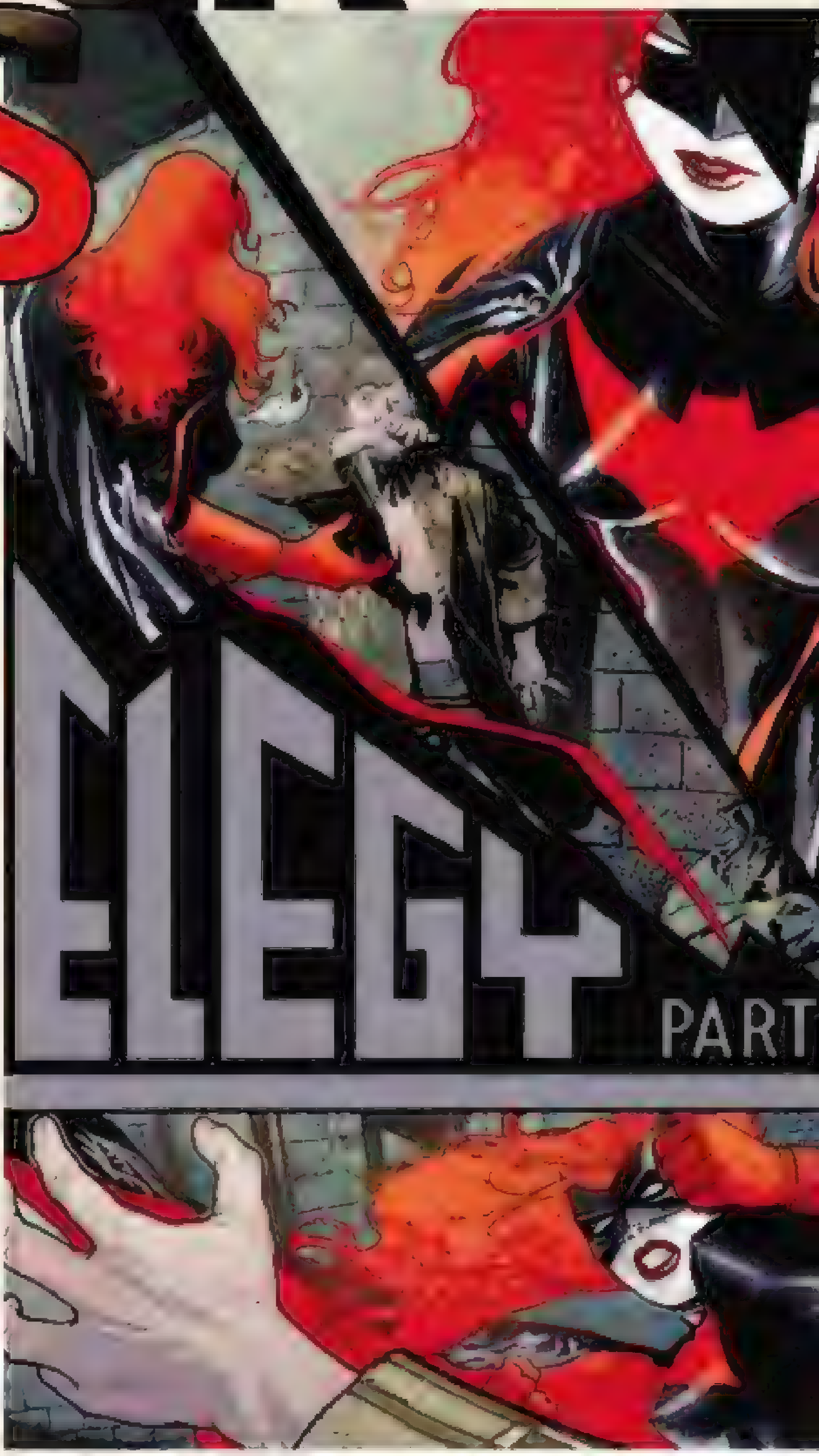
10 THAAL SINESTRO

For a guy with superpowers who's been around for a pretty long time, the Green Lantern has remarkably few enduring enemies (Vandal Savage? Doctor Polaris?). But that hardly matters when the main arch-nemesis is such a doozy. Thaal Sinestro is a moustache-twirling, magenta-skinned David Niven-lookalike who was the greatest the Green Lantern Corps had to offer before things went awry. Some of us may be getting sick of seeing Mark Strong as the go-to baddie *du jour*, but it's hard to deny that this is fantastic casting.

Hello, Batwoman! She likes the ladies.

OUT FROM UNDER THE BAT WINGS

M UNDER T WINGS



After working with the best in the business, JH Williams III is now flying solo. Stephen Jewell reports

Not many artists can claim to have collaborated with both Alan Moore and Grant Morrison. But after stamping his distinctive mark on the Northampton mage's most mindbending ABC title, *Promethea*, Jim 'JH' Williams III took on the formidable task of drawing both bookend issues of the Scottish *enfant terrible*'s ambitious 2005 multi-series crossover *Seven Soldiers Of Victory*. Now, following his controversial run on *Detective Comics* with Greg Rucka, the San Francisco native is branching out on his own, co-writing DC's new *Batwoman* monthly with *Star Wars* scribe Haden Blackman. It's a move that represents a return to his roots for the 45-year-old, whose first prominent work for DC was the short-lived *Chase*, which he scripted with Dan Curtis Johnson.

"It was a real whirlwind thing," Williams reflects when *Comic Heroes* meets him during a recent trip to London. "It's hard to remember all the things that happened in the correct order. I'd had some meetings with Dan Didio where I'd said that I wanted to get back into writing. I'd come up with the concept for something involving Batwoman that we were looking at doing as a special project. But then Greg had some things happening in his life, which meant that he had to slow down on the scripts. He was saying that he was done with DC and the next thing I knew they wanted to do *Batwoman* with me as the writer."

Batwoman has, so far, been a much happier experience than *Chase*, which ended abruptly in 1998 after only nine issues. "We created *Chase* to get ourselves jobs but it very quickly became something that we cared about, and it showed in the work," recalls Williams, who had previously filled in on the likes of *Batman* and *Green Lantern* before being asked to pitch for an ongoing series.

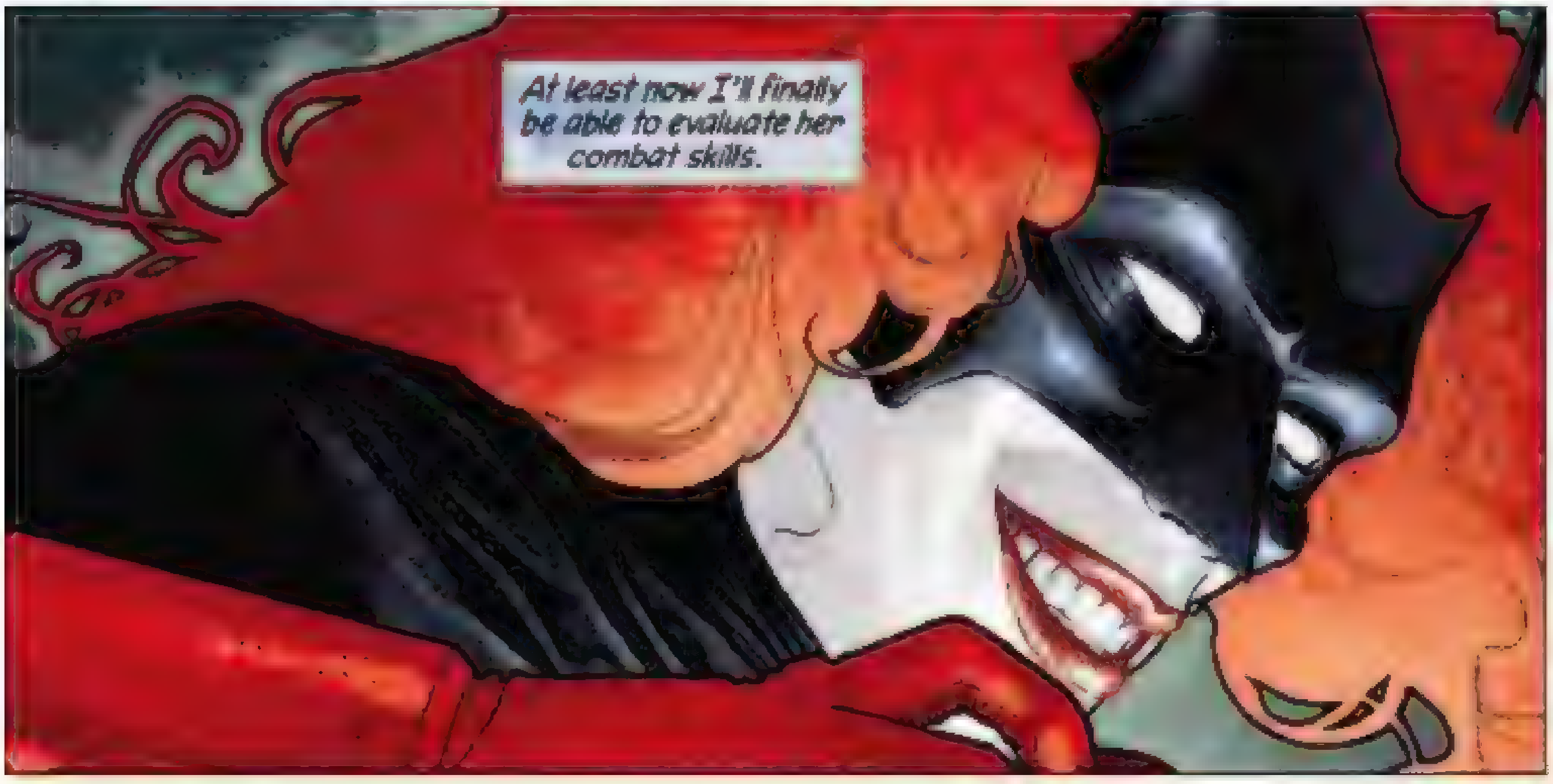
CAPED CRUSADER

"The editor said that he liked chicks with capes so we came up with the idea of a trenchcoat-wearing detective," he laughs. "But we received inadequate company support and DC cancelled the book just as an underground buzz started building. We'd actually started work on the next storyline involving the JLA and lots of big crazy stuff. It was disappointing because I honestly think that if we'd gotten those issues out, the series would have survived because people could see that we were doing something different at a time when fans were pretty jaded. The industry goes through ebbs and flows in that regard, and in some ways the material was a bit ahead of its time."

> "WE WERE DOING SOMETHING DIFFERENT AT A TIME WHEN FANS WERE PRETTY JADED"

MAIN: Red, black and white: Batwoman is instantly recognisable

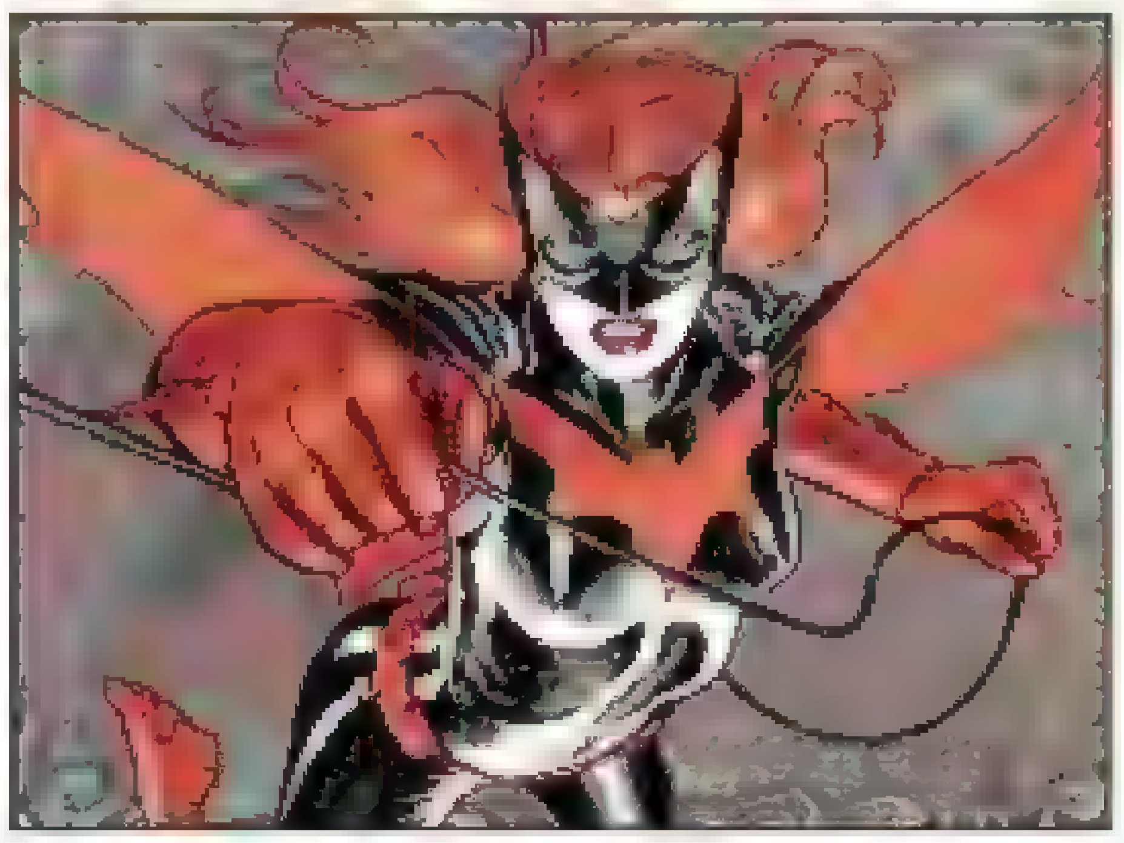
BELOW: We really wouldn't want to get on the wrong side of her.


At least now I'll finally be able to evaluate her combat skills.

After similarly chastening experiences at Marvel, Williams welcomed the opportunity to distance himself from the Big Two when WildStorm, then part of Image, offered him the art chores on *Promethea*. But before a single issue could be published, DC purchased the Jim Lee-founded imprint. "I thought that I have to do this as it's with Alan Moore, who is one of the most respected comic book creators of all time," says Williams, who honed his trademark experimental layouts on the book. "I'd been dabbling with some design elements from pretty early on in my career but when *Promethea* came along, it was like the doors were wide open to do whatever I wanted. Alan saw what I was doing and changed the way he wrote to suit that."

After Moore's infamously detailed scripts, Williams found Morrison's

ONE
AGITATO



more unpredictable approach almost liberating. "It's hard to compare them because they're both pretty amazing on a creative level," he says. "The biggest difference is that Grant's stories have this almost chaotic sense of pace. Sometimes when you read a page of one of his stories you have to go back and re-read the ones that came before it. There's a kind of wildness to what he does and he sometimes cuts things in a way that you're not prepared for mentally, so you have to rethink everything. Whereas Alan is very structured, he knows exactly where he's going to lead you and it's very evident when you're reading the script what his train of thought is."

IN THE DETAILS

Williams also collaborated with Warren Ellis on WildStorm's metaphysical spy series *Desolation Jones*. "Compared to Alan and Grant, Warren's scripts are much more traditional," he says. "They're detailed just enough and they're very direct. What's amazing about Warren is that even though his scripts are very succinct, he's still very good at getting across 'here's the weird idea we're trying to do'."

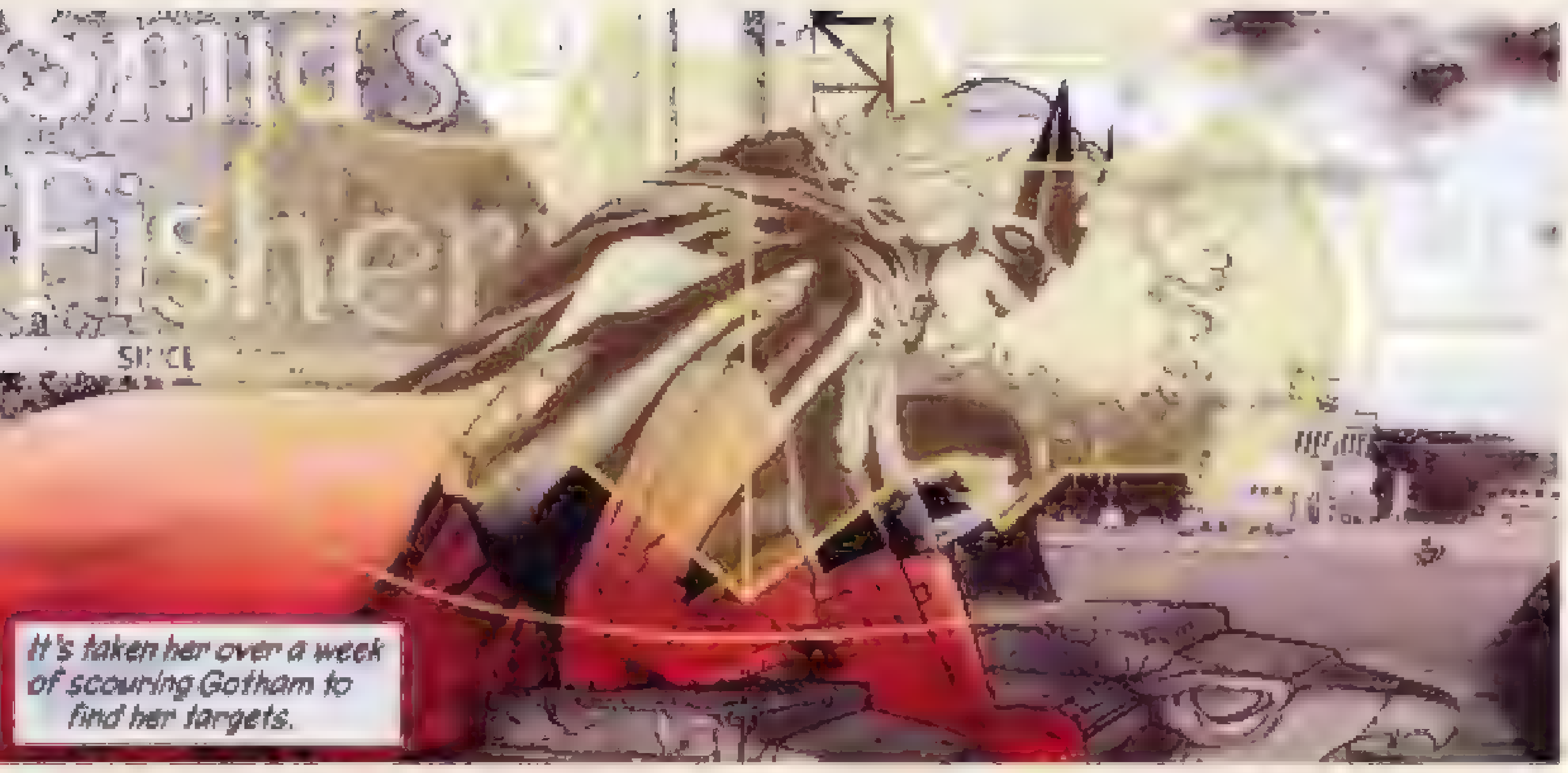
Script delays prompted Williams to leave after the first six-issue storyline. "After working on the book for a year I was feeling very stagnant but in the end the book came out really well," he admits, then revealing that before WildStorm's recent demise there was some talk of resurrecting the series, which has never completed its second Daniel Zezelj-drawn storyline. "Warren has mentioned it a couple of times to the people there and they've asked me if I'd like to return and I was like, 'If all the scripts are done then sure'."

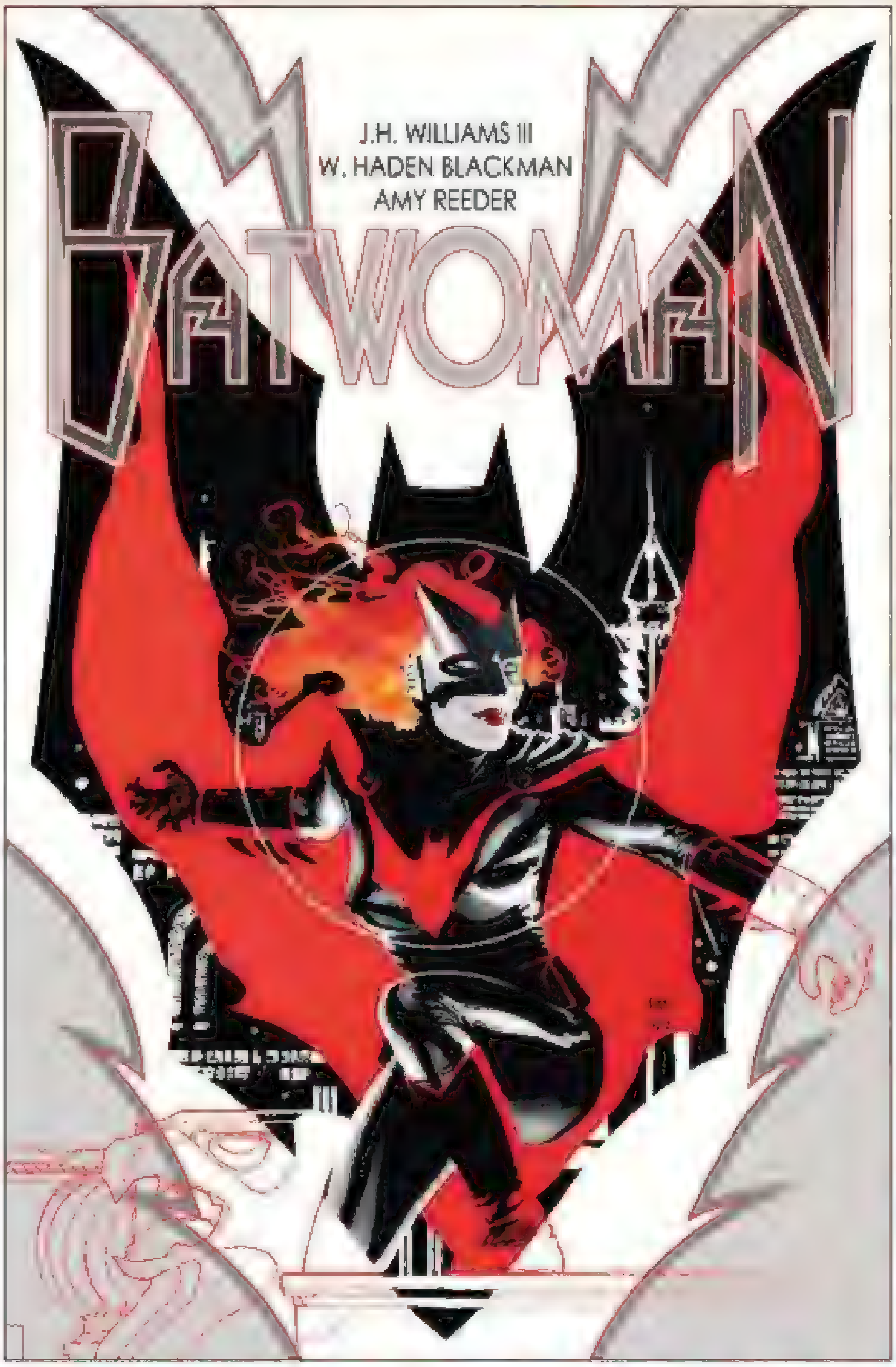
Williams's departure from *Desolation Jones* coincided with him being offered the opportunity to illustrate the adventures of his all-time favourite character, Batman. "I'm sure he's like that for a lot of creators as there's »

TOP RIGHT: A bad day for Batwoman. But at least she looks good

ABOVE: Warren Ellis's loss is Haden Blackman's gain.

OUT FRO THE BAT


Smith's
Fisher
It's taken her over a week of scouring Gotham to find her targets.



ABOVE: Mr Williams in all his bearded glory.

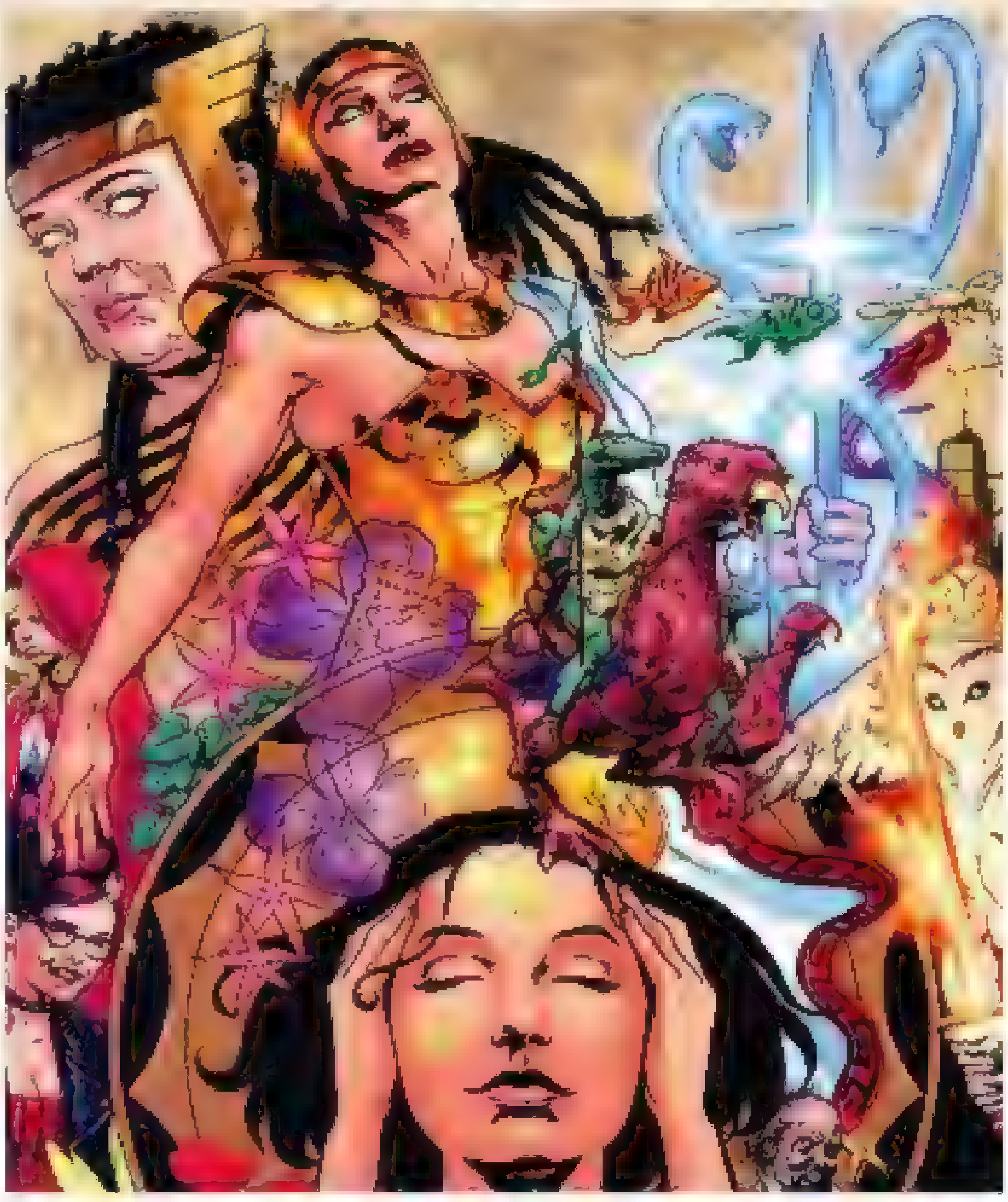
something about his character that is universally appealing," he reasons. "The fact that he's not really a superhero is one thing I find really fascinating. I don't care so much for the way he's been drawn by some people over the last ten years because he doesn't look human. But it's not like drawing Superman or another bombastic superhero and some people have forgotten that he's a normal guy in a suit, trying to do extraordinary things."

Williams's first Bat-assignment was Grant Morrison's three-parter 'The Island Of Mister Mayhew', (*Batman* #667-669), which centred around the International Club of Heroes whose ranks included the contemporary incarnation of Knight and Squire. "That story was a perfect fit for me because it said a lot about the history of superhero comics," notes Williams, who then teamed up with Greg Rucka on the adventures of the reinvented Batwoman in *Detective* during the apparently dead Bruce Wayne's temporary absence from the contemporary DC Universe.

SEXUAL HEALING

"Instead of having to follow in someone else's footsteps, it was a fantastic opportunity for me to do something distinctive with a character," says Williams. "That was a bit daunting because I was helping Greg build the character from the ground up because she had made so few appearances.

BELOW: Williams's work on Alan Moore's *Promethea*. It's one of his more complex works, but looks beautiful throughout.



T FROM UNDE
BAT WINGS

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We were able to establish what this character means and then let other people follow on afterwards."

First created in 1956, the Silver Age Batwoman Kathy Kane was written out of continuity at the end of the *Crisis Of Infinite Earths* in 1985. Now known as Kate Kane, the current incarnation made her debut in 2006 in the Grant Morrison/Greg Rucka/Mark Waid-written year-long extravaganza *52*. Ironically, considering that she was originally a token love interest designed to refute allegations of homosexuality made against Batman in Frederick Wertham's infamous *Seduction Of The Innocent*, the character was at the centre of a media frenzy after DC announced just before Rucka and Williams's *Detective* run hit the shelves that she is actually a lesbian. But rather than being a salacious promotional ploy, Batwoman's sexuality turned out to be an integral part of the plot. "There was a lot of brilliance in the way Greg constructed the story," reflects Williams. "At first, it seemed kind of matter of fact that she was gay but then we find out that her being gay is what led her down the path to become Batwoman."

The seven-issue arc concluded with the revelation that Religion of Crime leader Alice is actually Kate's long-lost, presumed-dead sister, a development that Williams and Blackman plan to explore further. "We're going to look at the impact that has had on her relationship with her father, which had become so twisted at the end of the story," he says. "The emotional trauma of not only discovering that Alice is her sister but apparently losing her all over again when she falls out of the plane and into the river is going to have some serious psychological effects. And it's something that's going to be used against her by some of the new villains we're creating."

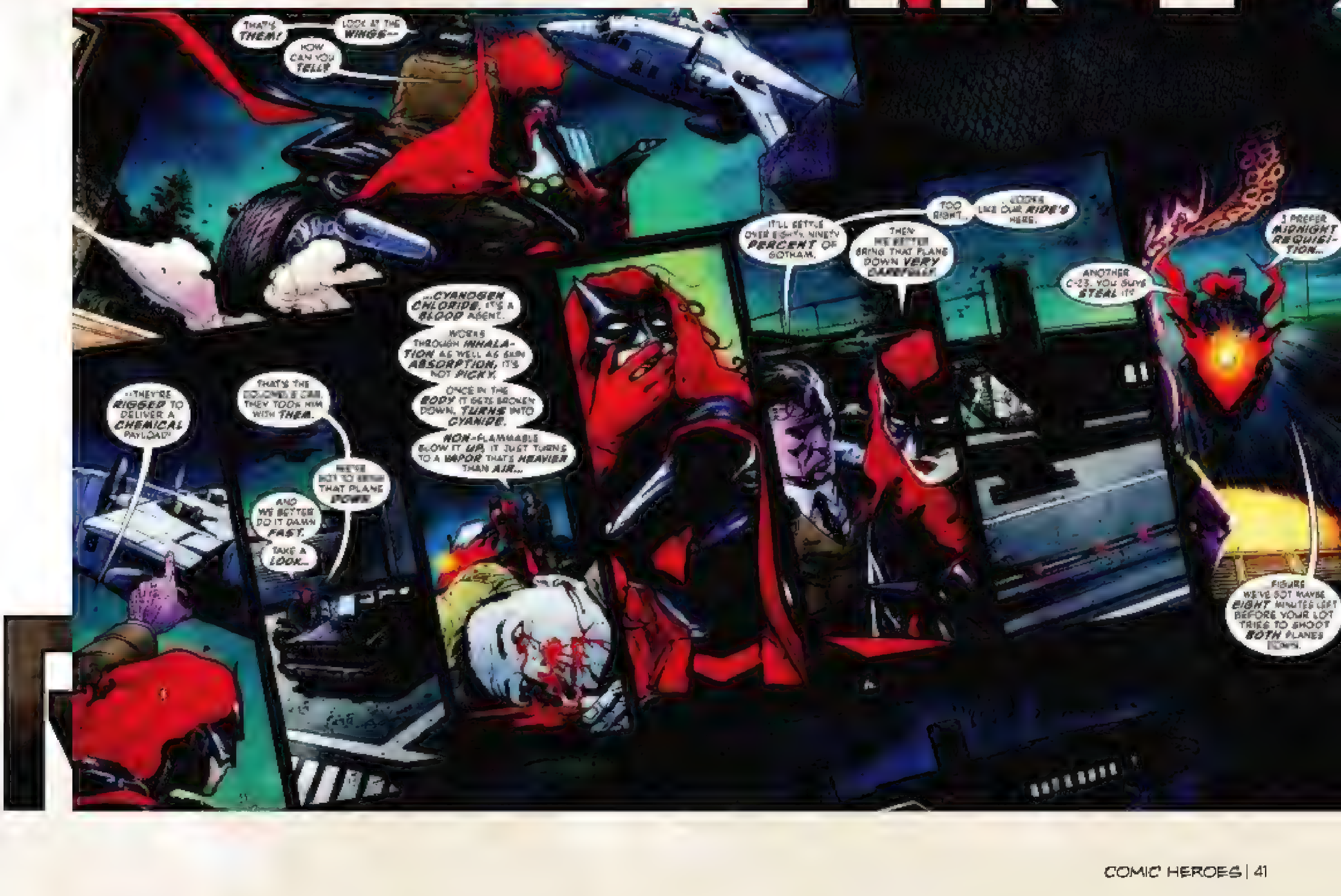
SUPER BAD

Williams intends to establish a memorable stable of archenemies that Batwoman can call her own. "Batman, the Flash, Wonder Woman and so forth all have these particular rogues galleries," he declares. "Every strong hero needs an equally strong villain in order to define that character. That's one of the things that we're doing over the course of the first 12 to 15 issues. Hopefully people will enjoy it and those characters will then crop up in other titles. What we're doing is very particular to Batwoman and it will give her some long term story possibilities."

After *Promethea*'s anything goes approach, Batwoman's grid-like page structure is conventional in comparison. "*Promethea* was like a relentless visual feast and there are probably places where we went too far," laughs Williams, who will share art duties with *Madame Xanadu*'s Amy Reeder Hadley. "With superhero comics like Batwoman, I thought that it would be best to leave that kind of stuff to the key moments, to pare everything back so when you do come up with a crazy layout for the right scene, it really enhances it and gives it more weight." CH

"SOME PEOPLE HAVE FORGOTTEN THAT BATMAN IS A NORMAL GUY IN A SUIT, TRYING TO DO EXTRAORDINARY THINGS"

BELOW: Williams's interiors are just as striking as his covers This is one individual superhero book.


OUT
THE
THAT'S THEM!
LOOK AT THE WINGS--
HOW CAN YOU TELL?
...CYANOGEN CHLORIDE, IT'S A BLOOD AGENT.
WORKS THROUGH INHALATION AS WELL AS SKIN ABSORPTION, IT'S NOT PICKY.
ONCE IN THE BODY IT GETS BROKEN DOWN, TURNS INTO CYANIDE.
NON-FLAMMABLE BLOW IT UP, IT JUST TURNS TO A VAPOR THAT'S HEAVIER THAN AIR...
--THEY'RE RIGGED TO DELIVER A CHEMICAL PAYLOAD!
THAT'S THE COLONEL'S CAR. THEY TOOK HIM WITH THEM.
WE'VE GOT TO BRING THAT PLANE DOWN.
AND WE BETTER DO IT DAMN FAST.
TAKE A LOOK...
IT'LL SETTLE OVER EIGHTY, NINETY PERCENT OF GOTHAM.
TOO RIGHT...
LOOKS LIKE OUR RIDE'S HERE.
THEN WE BETTER BRING THAT PLANE DOWN VERY CAREFULLY.
ANOTHER C-23. YOU GUYS STEAL IT?
I PREFER MIDNIGHT REQUISITION...
FIGURE WE'VE GOT MAYBE EIGHT MINUTES LEFT BEFORE YOUR LOT TRIES TO SHOOT BOTH PLANES DOWN.

wnmagaz.co

the heroine's progress

The legendary Pat Mills charts the fall and possible rise of girls' comics

Imagine row upon row of female graphic novels on book shop shelves. Imagine a glossy magazine called *Comic Heroines*, with all the latest info on girls' comics and interviews with their writers and artists. Imagine a girls' fantasy comic that's over 30 years old and still selling well today – just like *2000 AD*. Imagine comic conventions where the majority of fans are women but a few guys come along with them, eagerly noting the rare realistic male heroes who appear in female stories and commenting rather optimistically, "It's a promising sign that times seem to be changing and us blokes are finally getting a look in."

It didn't happen, and yet it might have done – and it's only due to a minor quirk of fate that it didn't. And it could still happen. There's the success of female manga and the massive sales of *Best Of Jackie* reprints as promising indicators. Three *Best Of Jackie* hardbacks recently sold a total of 89,000 copies retailing at £13-17 each. How many male British graphic novels are in that league?

The decline of female comics wasn't a result of disinterest by their readers. It was due to the publishing 'Slough of Despond' – a lack of energy and empathy with the audience and creators – that eventually dragged down nearly all British comics apart from *2000 AD*, *The Beano* and *The Dandy*.

A NEW DAWN

The story begins with the appearance of *Tammy* at the start of the 1970s. It heralded the start of a British comic revolution that swept aside the dated comics of the past and breathed new life into the genre. *Tammy* was created by Gerry Finley-Day, who's well known to comic fans as the writer and creator of *Rogue Trooper*, *Fiends Of The Eastern Front*, *Rat Pack*, *Hellman* and many more. *Tammy* would lead directly to the launch of *Battle*, *Action* and *2000 AD* – and this is why Gerry is, without a doubt, the founder of modern British comics.

Tammy was different to other girls comics, such as *Bunty* or *June*. And this difference made it hugely popular – it sold 250,000 copies a week. (*2000 AD* sales were 200,000 a week with the release of Prog 1.) So how was it different? Don't be deceived by its innocent cover: it was nasty! It was dark! It kicked ass! Especially during its first – and greatest – year. All those middle-class teachers who, even today, want to bring back *Look And Learn* and other 'nice' educational comics for 'nice' children loathed it.

The best of
Jackie

ABOVE: Remember this? Those were the days, eh?

Here are some examples they would have particularly loathed and which the readers particularly loved. In its first year, there was *Slaves Of War Orphan Farm*. Written by Gerry and Ian McDonald, it featured the evil Ma Thatcher who used wartime girl evacuees as slave labour. Yes, it was inspired by Mrs Thatcher, then known as the Milk Snatcher, who Ian rightly feared would one day become Prime Minister. Ma was a great villain, comparable to Fagan from *Oliver Twist*. Alas, I couldn't find the episode where one of the girls gets her foot caught in one of Ma's spiked traps, but I still

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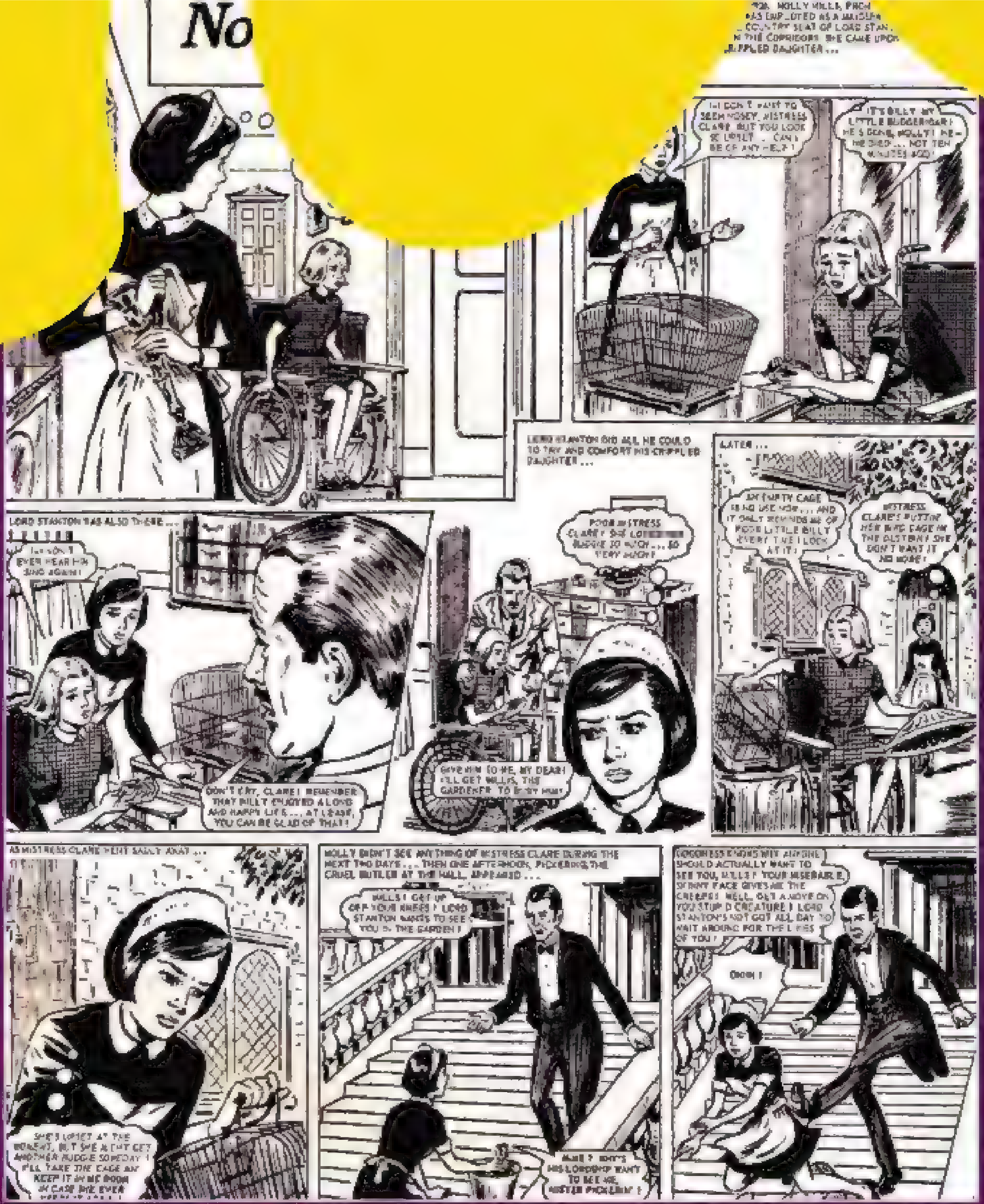
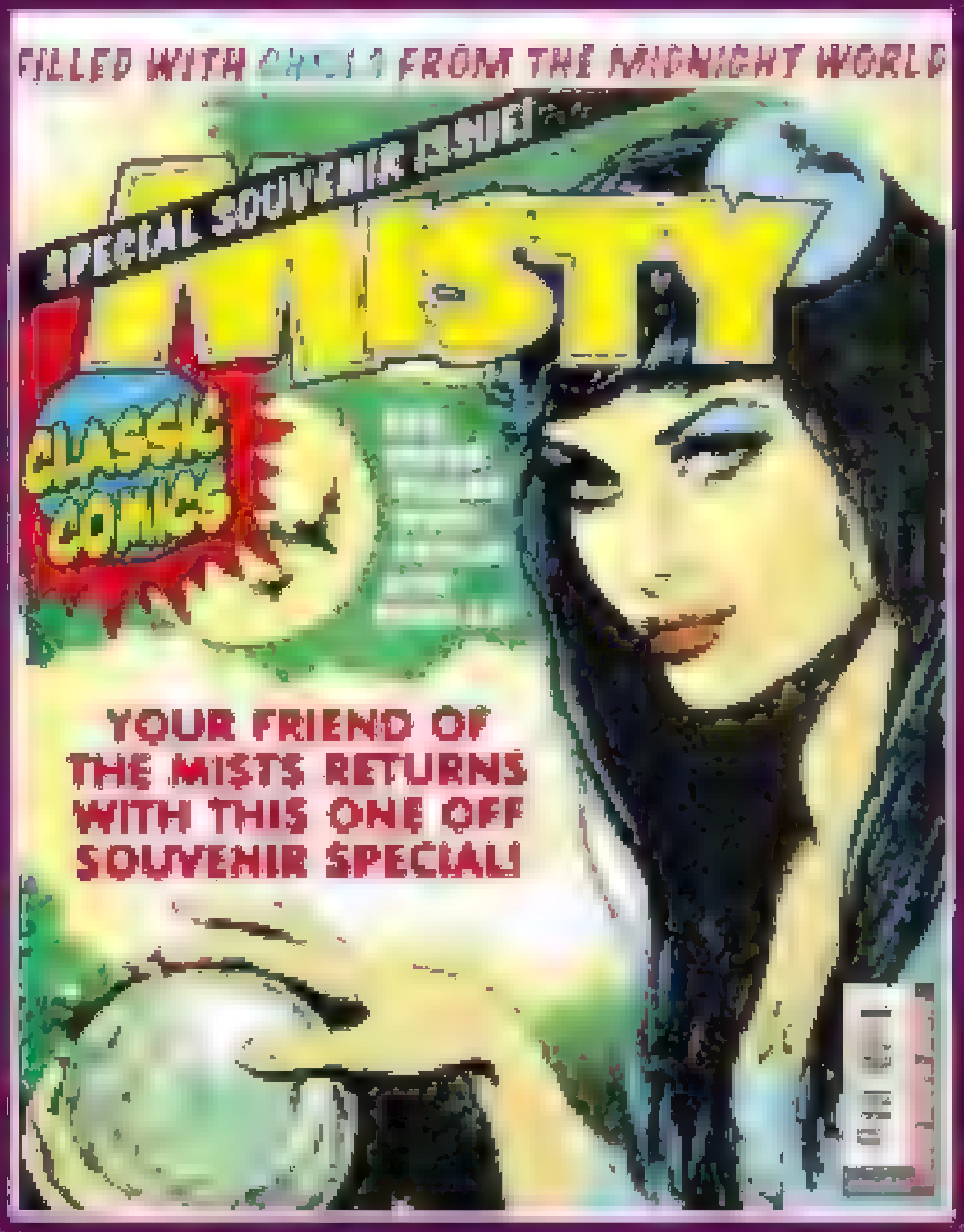
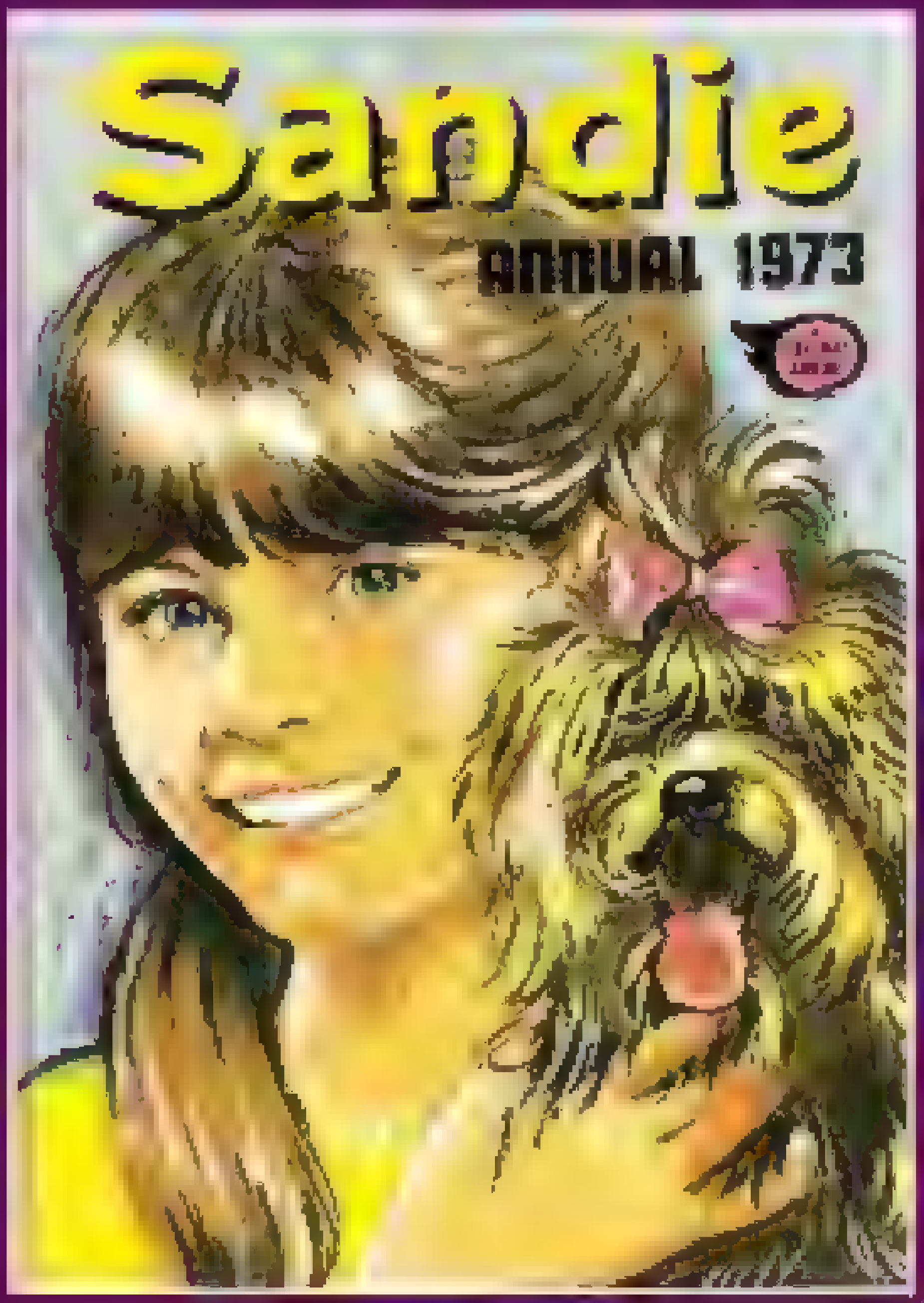
> "THE STORY BEGINS WITH THE APPEARANCE OF TAMMY AT THE START OF THE 1970S"


No
LORD STANTON DID ALL HE COULD TO TRY AND COMFORT HIS CRIPPLED DAUGHTER ...
LATER ...
LORD STANTON WAS ALSO THERE ...
DON'T CRY, CLARE! REMEMBER THAT BILLY ENJOYED A LONG AND HAPPY LIFE ... AT LEAST, YOU CAN BE GLAD OF THAT!
GIVE HIM TO ME, MY DEAR! I'LL GET WILLIS, THE GARDENER, TO BURY HIM!
AS MISTRESS CLARE WENT SADLY AWAY ...
MOLLY DIDN'T SEE ANYTHING OF MISTRESS CLARE DURING THE NEXT TWO DAYS ... THEN ONE AFTERNOON, PICKERING, THE CRUEL BUTLER AT THE HALL, APPEARED ...
MILLS! GET UP OFF YOUR KNEES! LORD STANTON WANTS TO SEE YOU IN THE GARDEN!
ME? WHY'S HIS LORDSHIP WANT TO SEE ME, MISTER PICKERING?
OOOH!


FILLED WITH CHILLS FROM THE MIDNIGHT WORLD
SPECIAL SOUVENIR ISSUE!
MISTY
CLASSIC COMICS
YOUR FRIEND OF THE MISTS RETURNS WITH THIS ONE OFF SOUVENIR SPECIAL!


Sandie
ANNUAL 1973

ABOVE: Never trust a nasty butler. Poor old Molly. Still, no tears for you.

ABOVE RIGHT: Pat Mill's *Misty* is much-missed spooky fare

> "THERE WERE OTHER FEMALE WRITERS AND EDITORS, BUT THE MAJORITY WERE MALE"

remember how much I winced when I read it for the first time.

Tammy was influenced by the latest films and TV series, just as *2000 AD* was. So there was *Camp On Candy Island* – a nightmare holiday camp, obviously inspired by *The Prisoner*. Each week, the girls tried to escape like Number Six. There was also *No Tears For Molly*, informed by *Upstairs Downstairs*, which has recently returned to our screens. Pickering the Butler was another classic villain, constantly persecuting Molly the maidservant. He was the *Tammy* equivalent of Torquemada or Judge Death, and his violence was arguably more shocking for the fact that it was so incredibly realistic.

There were also complex psychological dramas with wonderfully subversive subtexts – such as *Ella On Easy Street*, written by Charles Herring and drawn by Casanovas, for example. Ella doesn't want to get on in life; she doesn't want her parents to turn into middle-class yuppies, constantly working overtime or studying. She likes her family just the way they are – happy and content – and sets out to sabotage their efforts to 'better' themselves. It may not sound like *Shameless*, but that was the gist of its message.

CINDERELLA STORY

The two most successful serials were *Bella* – written by Jenny McDade and drawn by John Armstrong – about a working-class gymnast, inspired by the sports icons of the day Nadia Comaneci and Olga Korbut. Jenny later went on to create the TV series *Supergran*. *Little Miss Nothing* – written by Pat Davidson – also proved exceptionally popular with readers, and begat dozens of similar Cinderella figures. The Cinderella plot is a key archetype in girls' comics, which is why I so admire the way it was deliberately turned inside-out on *Ella*.

And here the Slough of Despond started to bubble. Pat's stories were so successful that she eventually requested an acknowledgement of her efforts, such as a byline, otherwise she would leave to work for Dutch title *Tina*. The managing editor at the time refused, because, as he explained to me later, "We can't have writers and artists telling us what to do. We have to show we're in charge." And so Pat left, and girls' comics lost their top writer. She was the equivalent, in terms of her importance to hard commercial sales, of Alan Moore in the world of superhero comics.

There were other female writers and editors, but the majority were male – and this was because female journalists didn't actually like comics very much. They wanted to work on the cool fashion magazines that were around at the time, and saw comics simply as an embarrassing poor relation. So this was why there was a whole group of chaps filling the void.

It gave us a unique opportunity to write psychological, historical, emotional and social commentary stories that were way ahead of the ludicrous male comics of the time, which featured the likes of Captain Hurricane tying knots in tank barrels. Thus, my first girls' story was about a heroine living in Ireland through the Great Famine of the 1840s. The Scottish managing editor changed it to the Highland Clearances so that it would prove less controversial.

As well as Gerry and myself, there was John Wagner – writer and creator of *Judge Dredd* – who was editor

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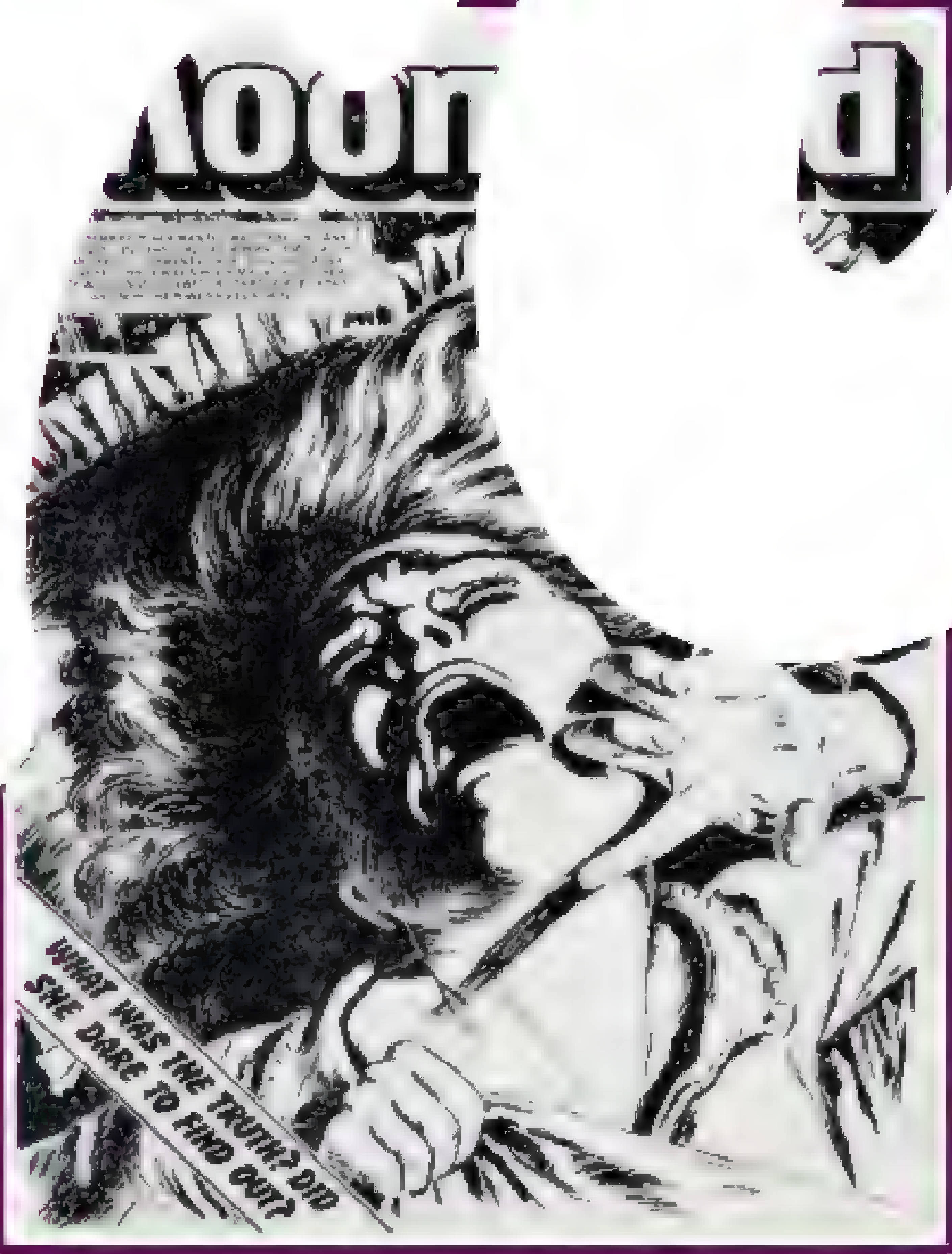
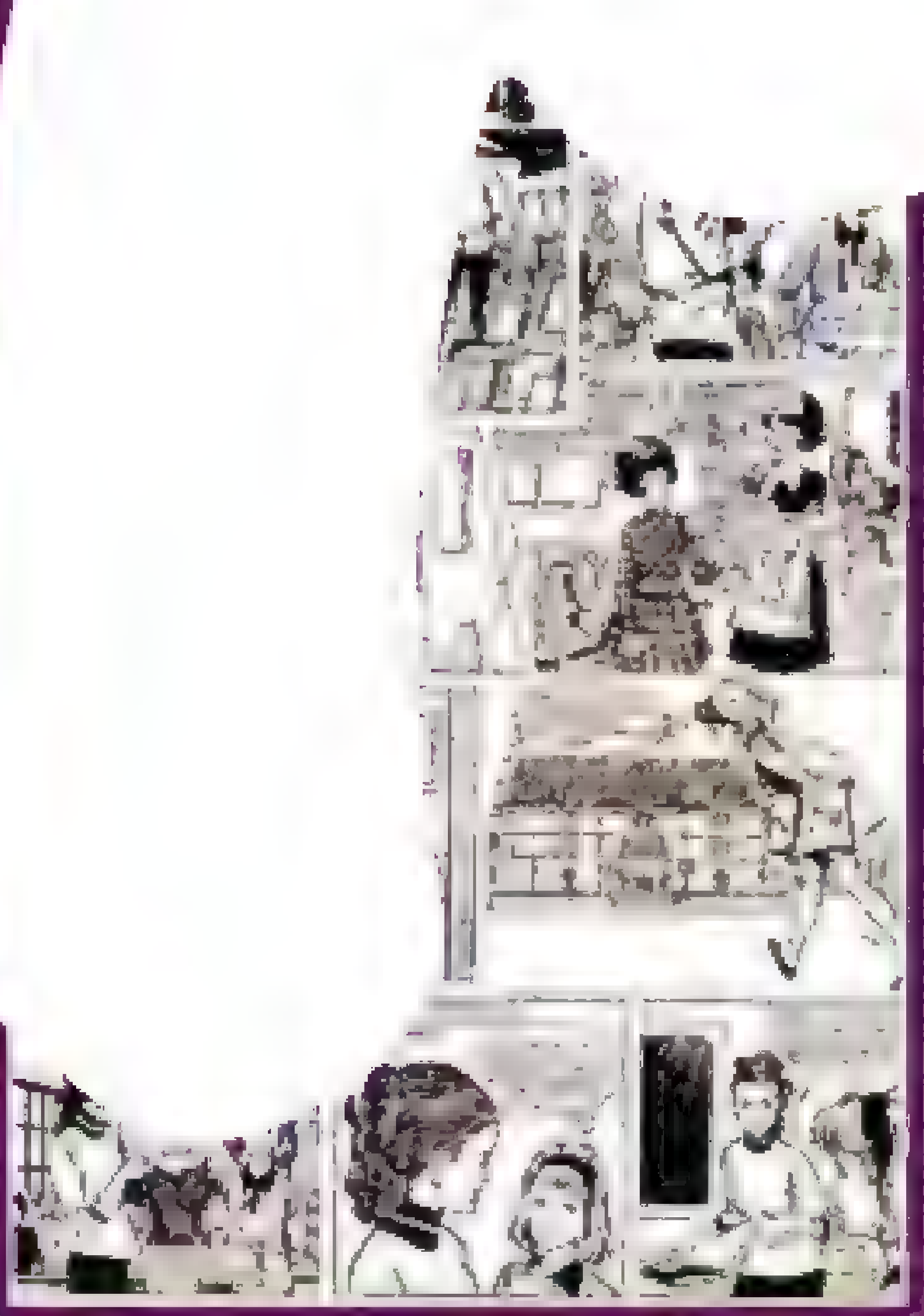
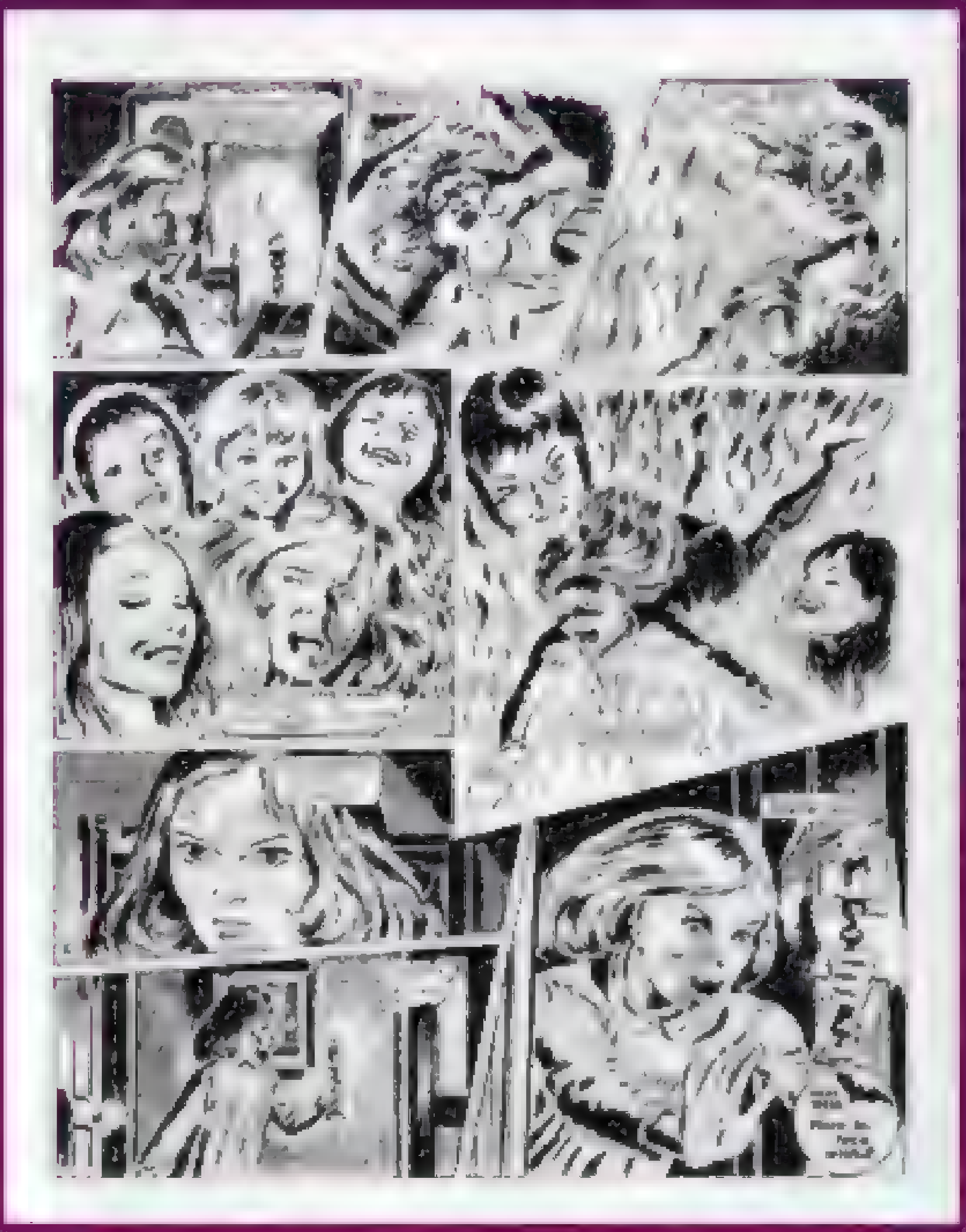

WHAT WAS THE TRUTH? DID SHE DARE TO FIND OUT?



ories NOT to be read at night!
MISTY
8p



on *Sandie*, and Malcolm Shaw, who originated *Jinty* with me. Another male writer was Joe Collins, who scripted *Becky Never Saw The Ball* – about a blind tennis player! I used to treasure it as the most bonkers girls' story of all time, alongside *Bunty's Limp Along Lindy* and *Flipper Feet* (a girl who's a champion swimmer thanks to her huge feet). Although I learned recently that they've all been surpassed by another *Bunty* story called *Penny's Pogo Stick*. It's World War 2, and Penny's dad is a top rocket scientist in Poland. She hides his rocket formulae in her pogo stick and pogoes her way across Nazi-occupied Europe to freedom.

SWITCHING SIDES

Okay, so girls' stories could be ridiculous, too, but for the most part there was an energy, an enthusiasm and a love of the genre that the readers sensed and responded to. Unlike on the boys' comics – *Valiant* and *Lion* – where they were sinking into the Slough of Despond as sales dropped dramatically and no-one knew or cared how to get out of the slump. So publisher John Sanders brought John Wagner and myself in – with Gerry as a freelance writer – to create *Battle*, applying radical girls' comic thinking to male comics. It worked: *Battle* was a success. I then moved on to create *Action* and *2000 AD*. Tharg's mighty comic was the most successful of all, because I learnt from mistakes made on its predecessors and was moving more towards a European comic approach. Gerry freelanced for *Action* and *2000 AD*, while John was given the thankless task of trying to revive *Valiant* and subsequently went on to create *Judge Dredd*.

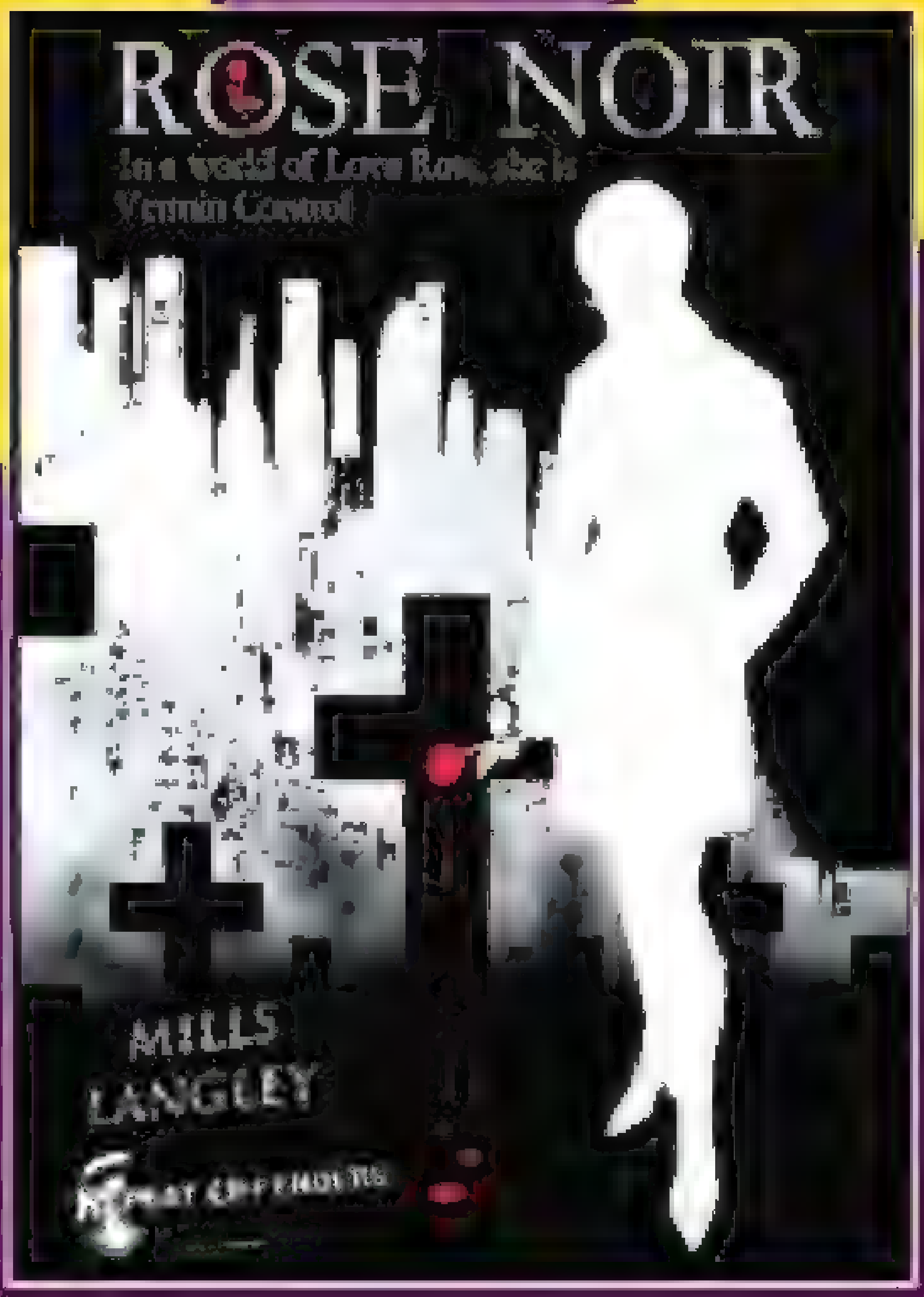
The energy moved from girls' to boys' comics, but we left a creative vacuum behind us that would eventually impact on sales. Meanwhile, noting the success of *2000 AD*, the publisher asked me to create the equivalent for girls. I loved the idea and I had a very clear idea of what I wanted to do. It would be called *Misty* and would draw on Stephen King novels, as well as other supernatural best-sellers such as *Audrey Rose* (about reincarnation) for inspiration. There would be no pogo sticks in *Misty*. No-one had gone this far before – not even on *Tammy*. It would have strong heroines, use the very best artists around and have dark, sophisticated themes, just like *2000 AD*.

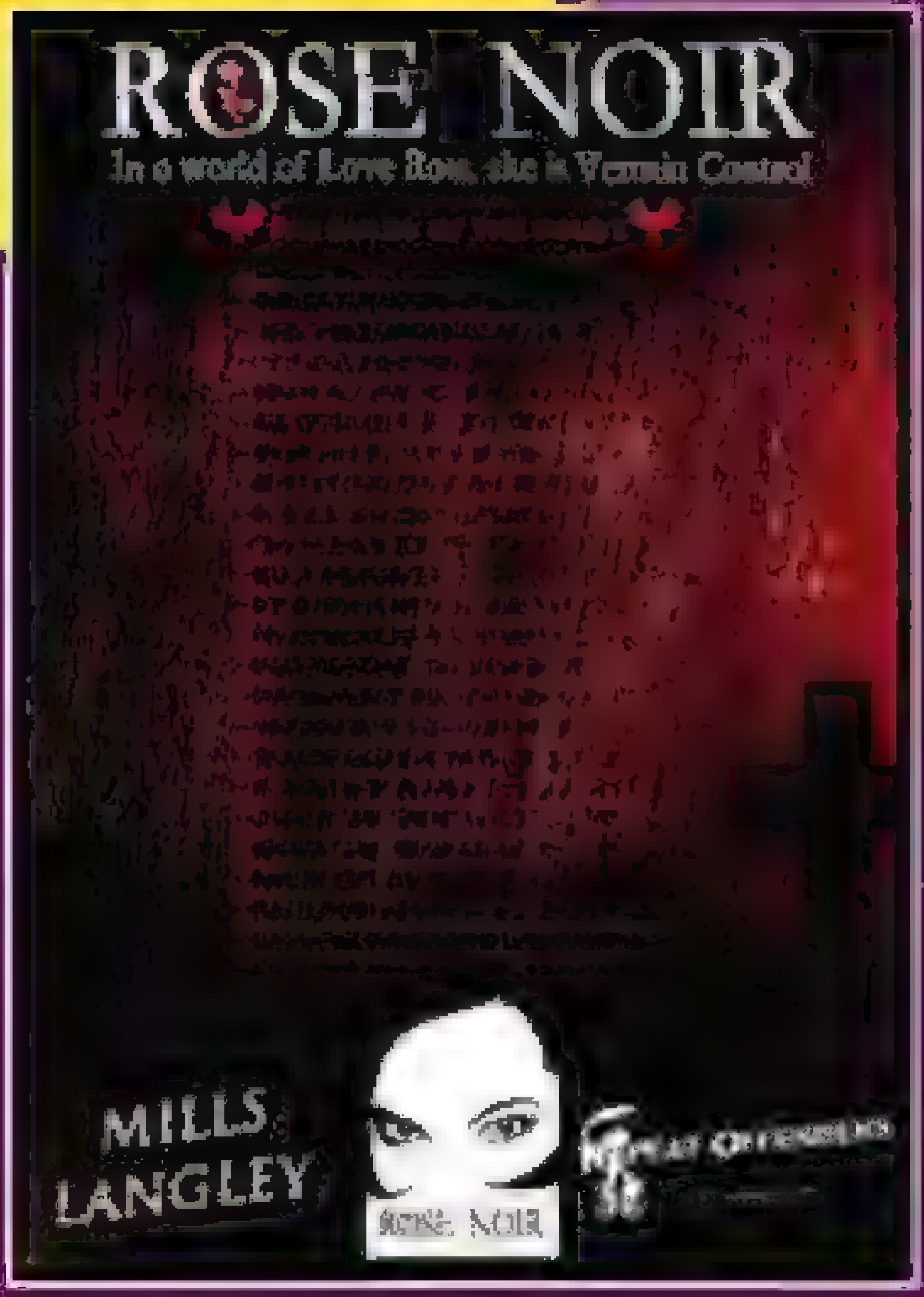
Success was guaranteed, because it was a far easier gig. There were more artists to choose from, plus more writers. Female readers tend to be more loyal than male readers, and they also read a lot more. *Misty* would be less time-consuming, with no spaceships, funky uniforms or future cities to design. So I agreed to do *Misty*, but on one condition: that I received a percentage of its profits.

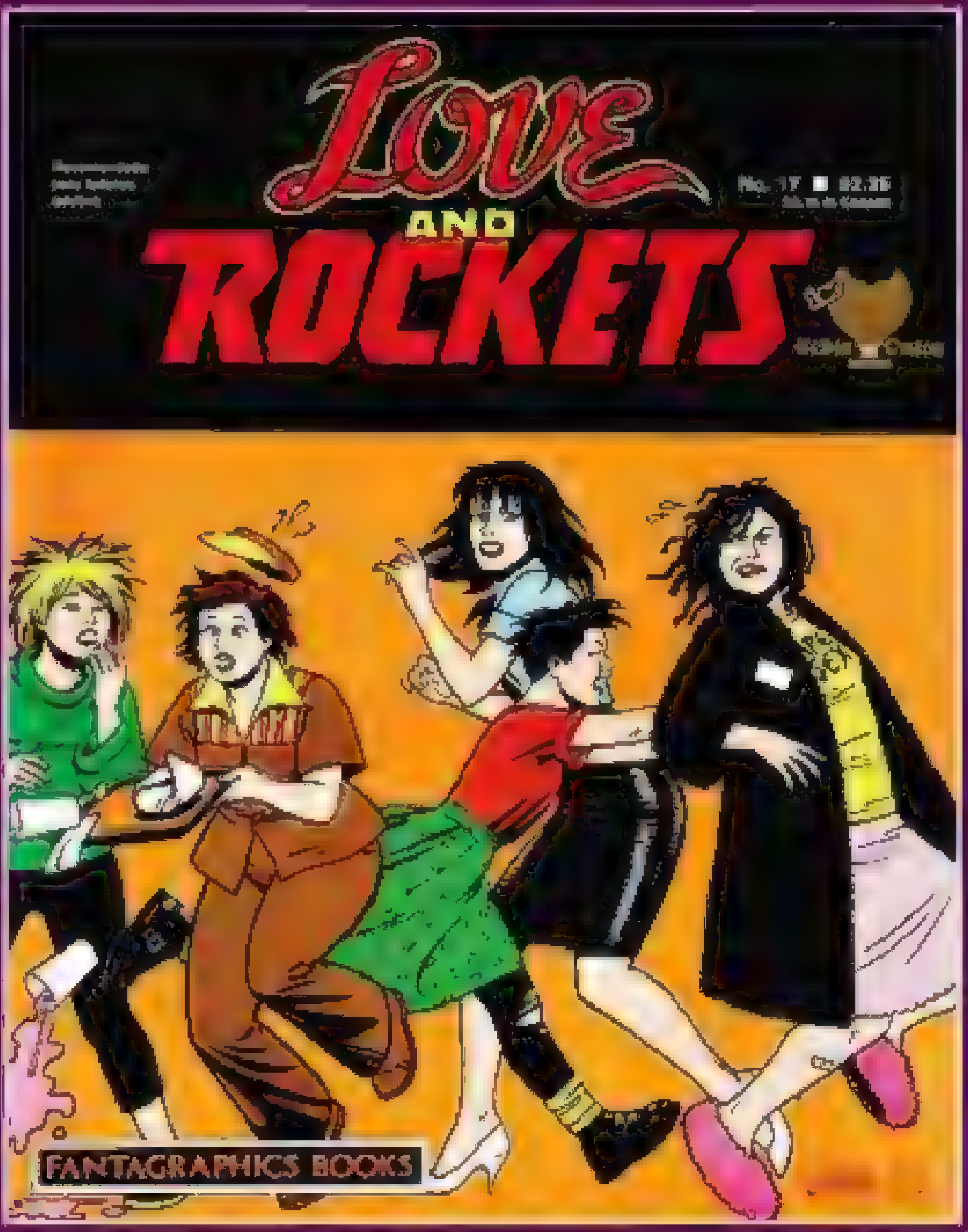
Sadly, the publisher couldn't get this past the board of directors, so I turned him down and returned to freelancing. I agreed to be a consultant editor, though, passing on my various ideas

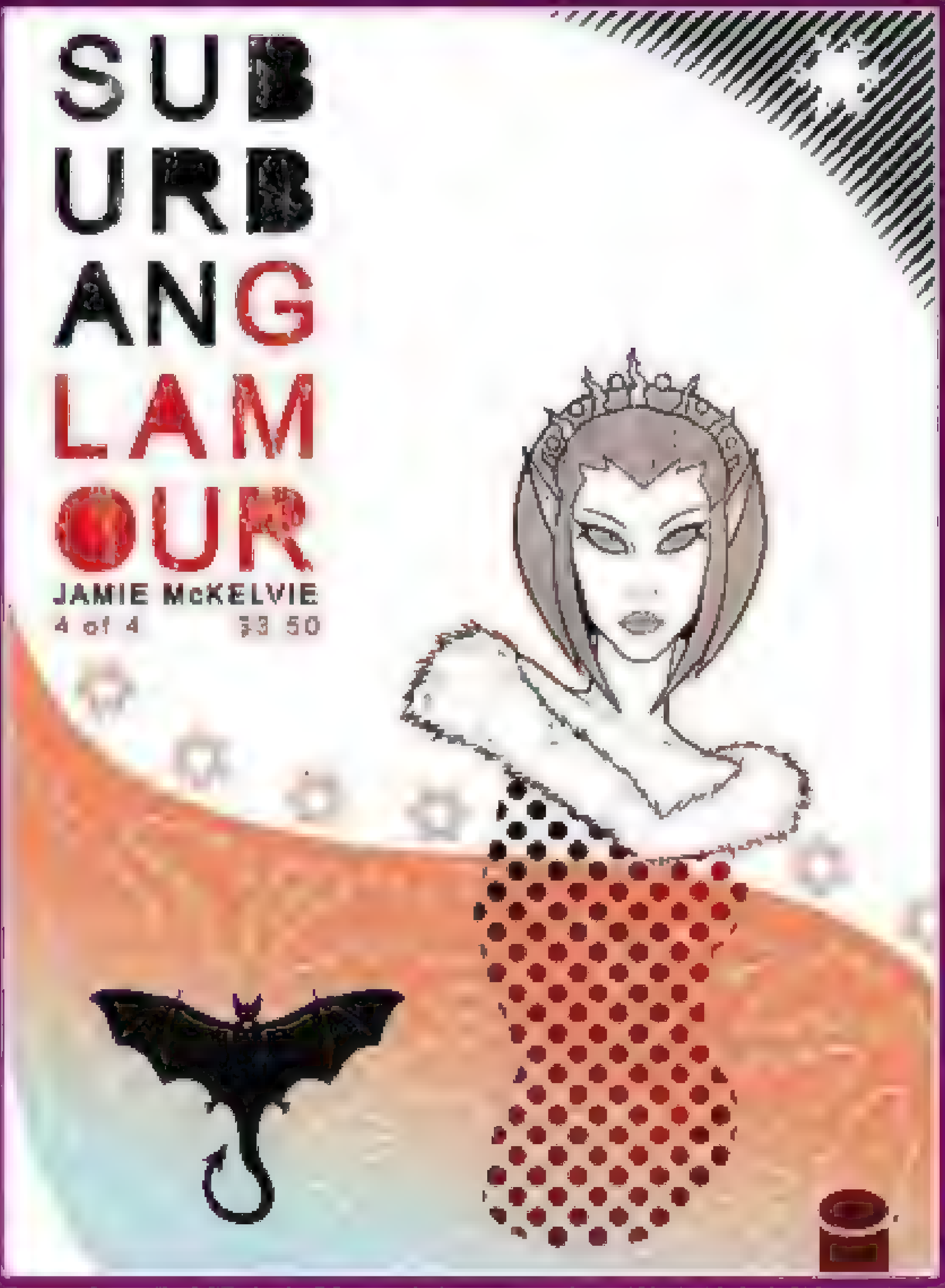
ABOVE LEFT: *Tammy's* darker storylines made it stand out from the likes of *Bunty*.

ABOVE RIGHT: *Moonchild* drew upon Mia Farrow for its heroine – who wasn't a happy girl.









for the comic, and also to write the lead story – *Moonchild*, inspired by Stephen King's *Carrie*. Using Mia Farrow as a basis for the heroine, I gave it the large, dramatic imagery that is *2000 AD's* hallmark. Artist John Armstrong rightly regards it as his best work, and it was hugely popular. I also initiated and wrote some very sinister *Twilight Zone*-style stories, although they were constantly toned down so as "not to scare the readers too much".

So it's that one minor quirk of fate that changed everything. If I had produced *Misty*, I'm pretty certain that it could still be around today, with a readership that grew up with the comic – just as *2000 AD* readers did.

It could have led to other, comparable developments. Alan Moore and Grant Morrison were writing for *2000 AD* in the early 1980s, so I would certainly have asked them to write something for *Misty*. Just imagine what they, or artists such as Brian Bolland, would have brought to the comic. I still have fond memories of a cover proposal that Bolland suggested for *2000 AD*, showing a monster looking up through a drain in the gutter at a girl passing in the street. That's the kind of *Misty* cover I would have commissioned. How different British comic history could have been.

GRINDING TO A HALT

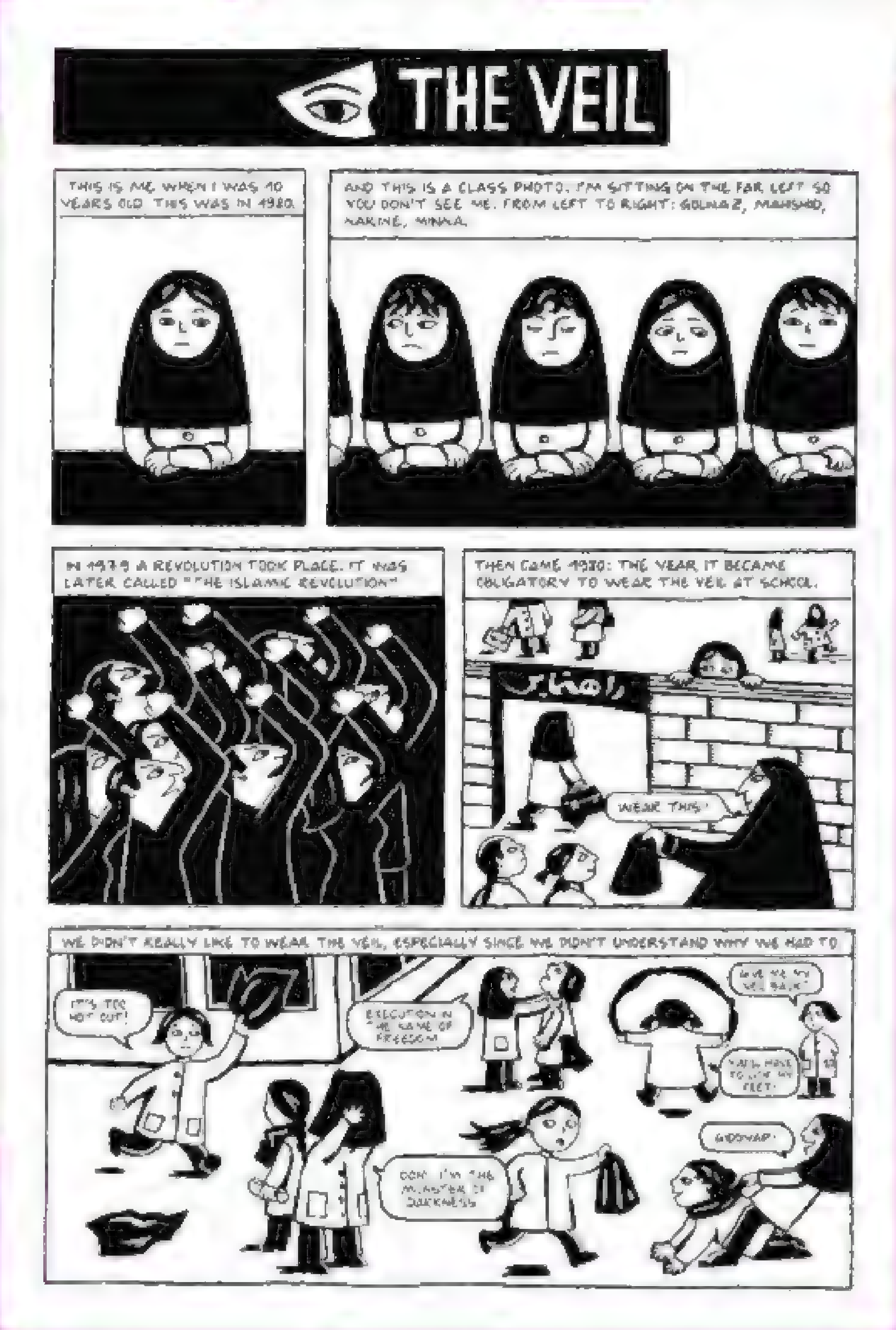
So how did *Misty* run out of steam? Well, the old guard took it over, there was a counter-revolution by comic conservatives and their 'safe pairs of hands' dragged it down into the Slough of Despond. Yes, *Misty* still had the symptoms, but not the disease. The stories weren't always clever enough, modern enough, edgy enough, cool enough. There weren't enough serials, or enough strong heroines. A year or so ago, Egmont, who now own the copyright, released a one-off collection of reprinted *Misty* stories. The evidence for its demise is there for all to see: nice, self-contained, old-fashioned, safe stories. Nothing to keep you awake during the day, never mind the night; it had been transformed. Original *Misty* readers, their daughters and I all shook our heads in despair. Who would rush down to the newsstand to buy this?

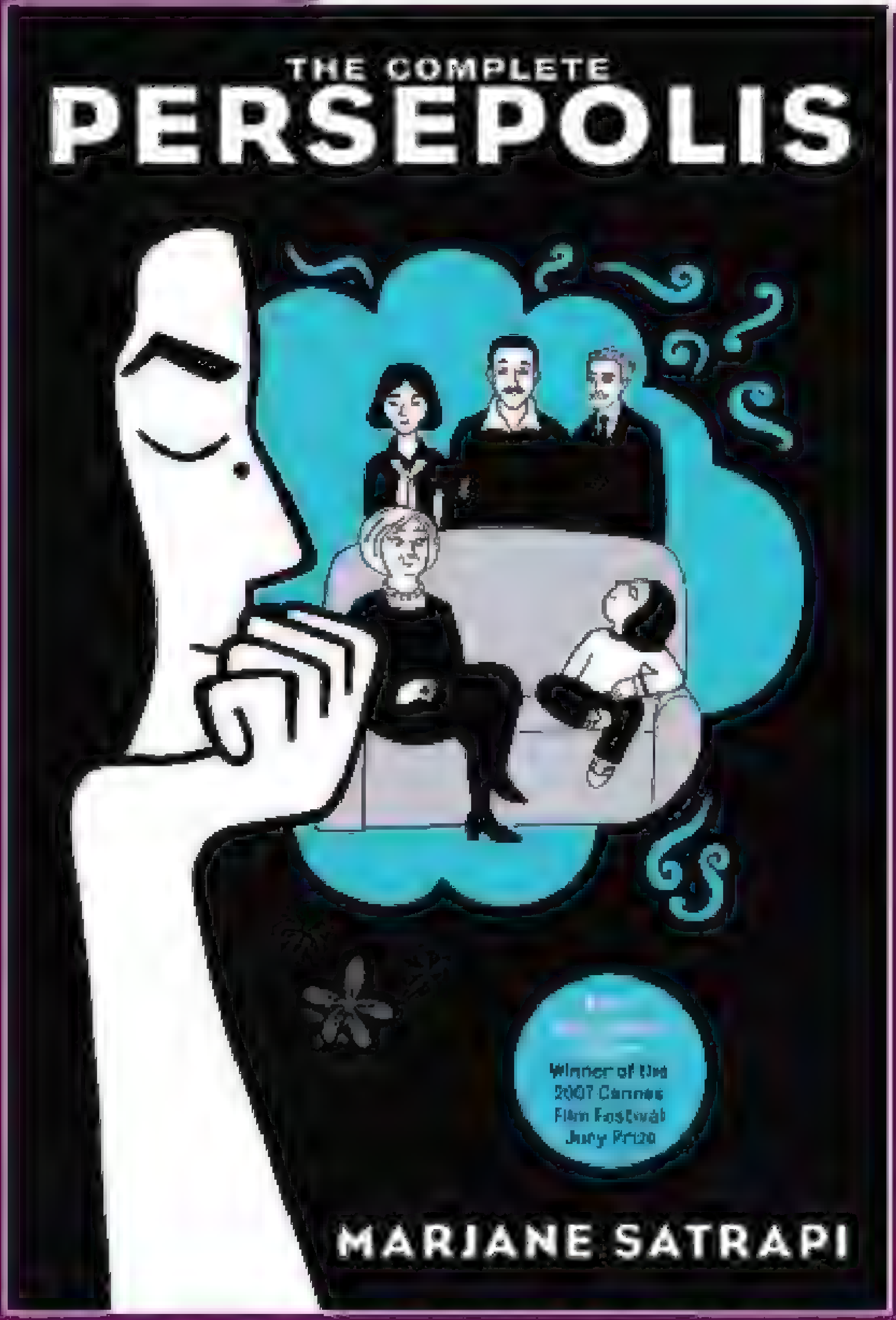
Publishers can happily tell you that there's no future in girls' comics. Comics are now predominantly a male sandpit, and most people in the business want to keep it that way, claiming they're actually all unisex now, anyway. They insist on telling you this, despite all the excellent exceptions that show the potential and the unique nature of the female market. There's Emma Vieceli producing fantastic manga-influenced stories. There's the heartbreaking *Persepolis*. *Suburban Glamour*. *The House That Groaned* (a deliciously foul forthcoming story about grotesque tenants in bedsit land by Karrie Fransman). *Strangers In Paradise*, with its brilliantly written dialogue, various series from Vertigo

ABOVE LEFT: Watch out for Mr Mills' *Rose Noir*, coming soon from Repeat Offenders.

ABOVE: Jamie McKelvie's *Suburban Glamour* from Image Comics is a lovely read.

www.downmagaz.com


THE VEIL
THIS IS ME WHEN I WAS 10 YEARS OLD. THIS WAS IN 1980.
AND THIS IS A CLASS PHOTO. I'M SITTING ON THE FAR LEFT SO YOU DON'T SEE ME. FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: GOLNAZ, MAHSHID, NARINE, MINNA.
IN 1979 A REVOLUTION TOOK PLACE. IT WAS LATER CALLED "THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION"
THEN CAME 1980: THE YEAR IT BECAME OBLIGATORY TO WEAR THE VEIL AT SCHOOL.
WEAR THIS!
WE DIDN'T REALLY LIKE TO WEAR THE VEIL, ESPECIALLY SINCE WE DIDN'T UNDERSTAND WHY WE HAD TO
IT'S TOO HOT OUT!
EXECUTION IN THE NAME OF FREEDOM
GIVE ME MY VEIL BACK!
YOU'LL HAVE TO LICK MY FEET.
GIDDYAP!
OOH! I'M THE MONSTER OF DARKNESS


THE COMPLETE
PERSEPOLIS
Winner of the 2007 Cannes Film Festival Jury Prize
MARJANE SATRAPI

Comics and the fantastically unique *Love And Rockets*.

There seems to be no interest, however, in producing anything for a mainstream female audience, for that huge and lost *Jackie* and *Misty* market. For the girl in the street, if you like, rather than the fan. And so I encouraged writer Jenny McDade when she told me about her idea for a graphic novel series called *Party Girls* – a kind of British *Sex And The City*. Aimed at an adult audience, it's about girls who aren't escorts, aren't wags and aren't groupies, but have something in common with all of them. When a famous film, rock or sports star arrives in town, these are the girls waiting in his hotel lobby for him to choose from. It's all arranged by an agent, and is very discreet. It's an authentic, untold, bittersweet story that needs telling, and I'm sure will challenge our moral compasses, just as all great stories should.

The artist had to have a very cool, sexy sense of fashion – so where would we find her or him? After all, most new comic artists want to draw superheroes, rather than girls wearing the latest fashions. After three years of hunting, Jenny and I had both just about given up. Then Charlie Bowden at Pickled Ink art agency – driven by our desire to revive female comics – organised a competition last year for newcomers to draw sample pages from *Party Girls* and win a £1,000 prize. We all agreed that there was one outright winner – Fay Dalton. She has tremendous talent and I'm sure her work will attract a strong male following, too.

STEPS FORWARD

So that's a step in the right direction. Another is my *Rose Noir*, a female vigilante story with a fantasy/horror spin. Appointed by the mysterious website 'CourtofLove.com', Rose punishes guys who have destroyed their girlfriends' lives. Her female revenge is more subtle than anything the Punisher dishes out, and more likely to make you wince. It's due to be illustrated by Clint Langley, and is next on his to-do list after he's finished our current project, *American Reaper*.

A further step might be to email Titan Books and ask them to reprint the better *Tammy* or *Misty* stories alongside their classics from *Battle*, such as *Charley's War*. You can also send such requests to me, and I'll forward them to Titan. Just looking around me at Comic-Con in San Diego last year, I was struck by how many girls were dressed up as comic-book characters. With so much female interest in comics, it really is time we shared our sandpit. After all, it could be a hell of a lot of fun.

> "THE STORIES WEREN'T ALWAYS CLEVER ENOUGH, MODERN ENOUGH, EDGY ENOUGH, COOL ENOUGH. THERE WEREN'T ENOUGH SERIALS OR ENOUGH STRONG HEROINES"

ABOVE: You may recall that *Persepolis* was turned into a very well-received animated movie in 2007.

Maestro Manara

Meet the Italian artist and author Milo Manara, one of the world's greatest illustrators of sensuous females in comics. By Paul Gravett

Sometimes dreams can come true. Bringing together Milo Manara and Marvel Comics seemed like an almost impossible fantasy. But in 2009 it happened in Italy and 2010 saw the American publication of an extraordinary *X-Men* tale written by Chris Claremont and illustrated by Manara himself. For many readers of superhero comics, the *X-Women* one-shot was probably their first exposure to the stunning draughtsmanship of Italy's most successful and widely translated comics creator.

Here were your favourite mutant maidens– Storm, Psylocke, Shadowcat, Marvel Girl and Rogue – not only saving the world, but looking fabulous doing it! There is much more to Manara, who has built up a long, prestigious career creating literary and erotic graphic novels of his own, as well as collaborating with superstar scriptwriters, from film director Federico Fellini to *Sandman* scribe Neil Gaiman. This year, the English-speaking public will be able to discover nine of Manara's masterpieces as Dark Horse Comics instigate a line of newly translated editions.

Last November, we were lucky enough to meet Manara at the first Rio de Janeiro Comic Con in Brazil, where he was guest of honour and spotlighted artist in an impressive, if slightly toned-down, exhibition of his originals, including the front cover painting for *X-Women*. Famed for his female figurework, he explained to me how he came to comics from a highly classical training. "After going to art school, I attended the Academy of Fine Arts and started as a painter and illustrator. My first job was in the office of Spanish sculptor Miguel Berrocal, where I drew sketches of his works. It was at his house that I discovered comics, especially French adult comics." This was in the swinging sixties, when Jean-Claude Forest unveiled *Barbarella*, adapted by Roger Vadim into a movie starring Jane Fonda, while Belgian Guy Peellaert was devising his brash, pop art heroines Jodelle and Pravda.

> "COMICS CAN ENGAGE WITH MORE PEOPLE THAN A PAINTING"

COMIC REVOLUTION

As well as being inspired by them, Manara remembers being swept up in a similar revolution underway in Italy, as their first comics for adults caught on, led by Diabolik, a body-suited master criminal created by the Giussani sisters Angela and Luciana in 1962. Soon the newsstands started filling up with compact, black-and-white paperbacks, almost graphic novellas, such as *Kriminal* and *Satanik* by Magnus and Bunker in 1964. These became notorious as 'fumetti neri', or black comics, named after their dark contents.

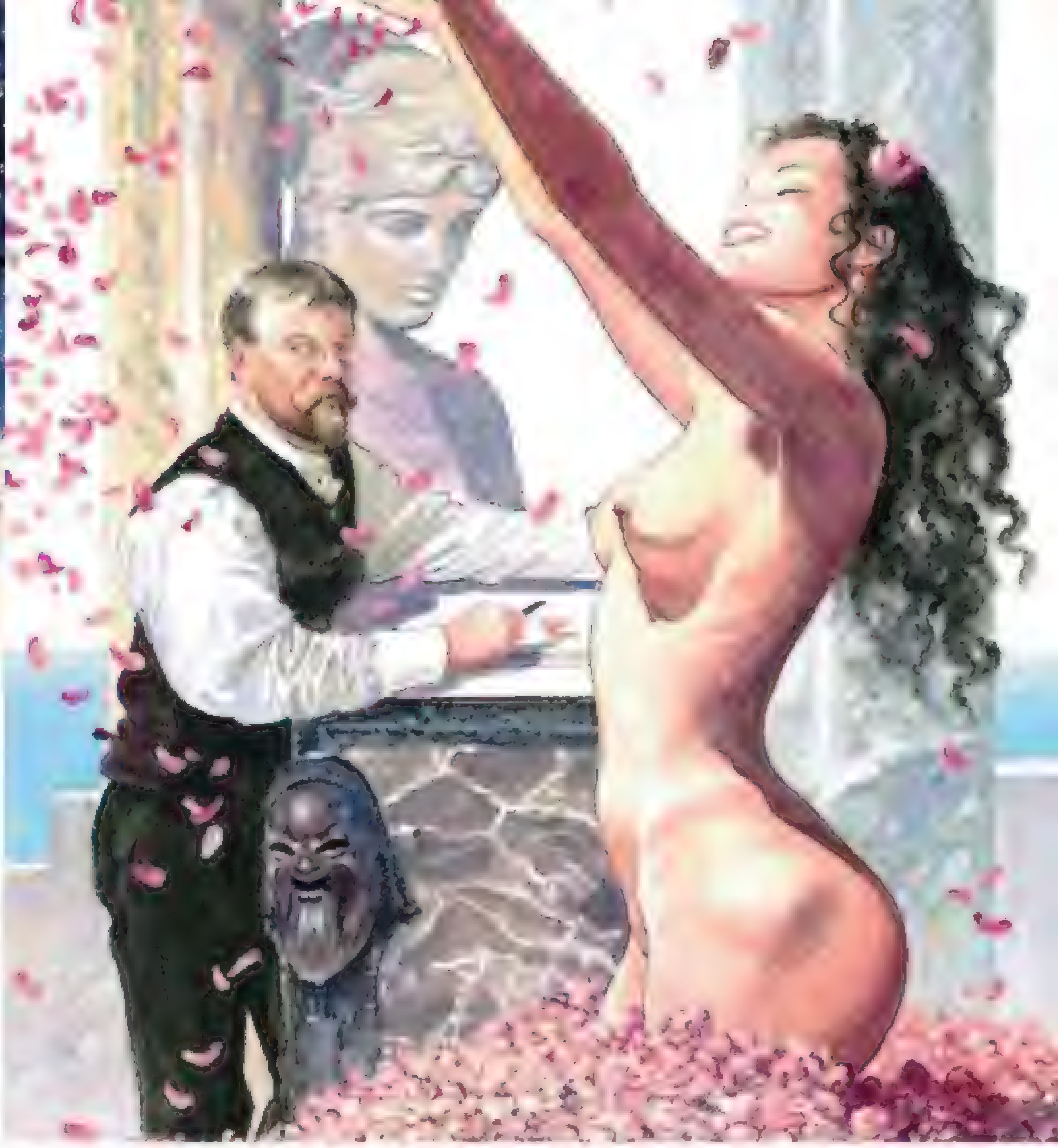
Then in 1965, *Linus* magazine introduced Guido Crepax's character Valentina with his striking Freudian themes and avant-garde designs. Manara recalls, "From French comics, and Magnus and Crepax, I realised that this medium could be the form of art and expression that most interested me. Comics can engage with more people than a painting, which is unique and

»

MANARA'S MASTERPIECES

Want to read Manara in English? Here are six of the Italian maestro's greatest works translated, out already or coming soon, from Heavy Metal, Humanoids, NBM or Dark Horse:

- *Indian Summer* with Hugo Pratt
- *Click!*
- *Butterscotch*
- *Trip to Tulum* with Federico Fellini
- *Borgia* with Alejandro Jodorowsky
- *Pandora's Eyes* with Vincenzo Cerami



ABOVE: This piece is entitled 'Alma Tadema'. And who wouldn't be happy at being covered in roses?

RIGHT: This painting goes by the name of 'Partenope'. Kinda Jolie-esque, no?

BELOW: A bit of Manara-esque Fellini for you, here.

can only be enjoyed by a limited number of people. These were the days of the 1968 protests, which were also directed at the art word. I took part in a protest myself at the Venice Biennale. Quitting painting for comics seemed the best step to take."

MAKING IT PERSONAL

In his early twenties and eager to break into the industry, Manara began drawing for the new genre of fumetti 'vietati ai minori' or forbidden to minors (under 16). Starting in 1966, over 100 of these adult comics would erupt in Italy with the emphasis more or less on sex, from the suggestive to the explicit. "I went to Milan with my drawings under my arm to find work, and that's how I was hired to draw for the publisher Furio Viano, who entrusted me with the comic *Genius*." As well as drawing the first 22 issues, sometimes with help from his studio mates, the young Manara also worked on *Jolanda De Almaviva* from 1971, a comic about a comely countess-turned-pirate. "I was lucky because it was a golden period for that type of comic, so I had plenty of work. This gave me some economic independence and the chance to try some more personal projects that interested me."

Manara's ambitions were growing, as he experimented with writer Silverio Pisú on *Lo Scimmiotto* (*The Ape*), a re-telling of the ancient Monkey King legend as an allegorical biography of Chinese leader Mao Tze Tung. Manara's big break into the more lucrative and respected French market came in 1978. "Thanks to Hugo Pratt [creator of the enigmatic seafarer Corto Maltese], I was introduced to his publisher Casterman. I remember at a meeting in a restaurant, Pratt was praising my work so much that the publisher asked if I had a story ready for France. Before I could say no, I got a big kick under the table from Pratt, and so I said 'Yes!'. And that's how I came to write and draw the first story of HP Guiseppe Bergman." A youthful thrill-seeker drawn to exotic locales, Bergman bears an unmistakable resemblance to Manara. "His initials came to me from Pratt's name, but the character represents me. Many of the adventures came from my experiences. I drew one story during a trip to Asia in my camper van. Others arose from long talks with Pratt." Serialised in Casterman's new comics monthly, *À Suivre* (*To Be Continued*), and sprinkled with literary references to Pirandello, Borges and others, the *Bergman* series marked Manara's arrival in French comics. "This definitely enabled me to develop as a complete auteur. Only in France can we really work with dignity on our own creations."

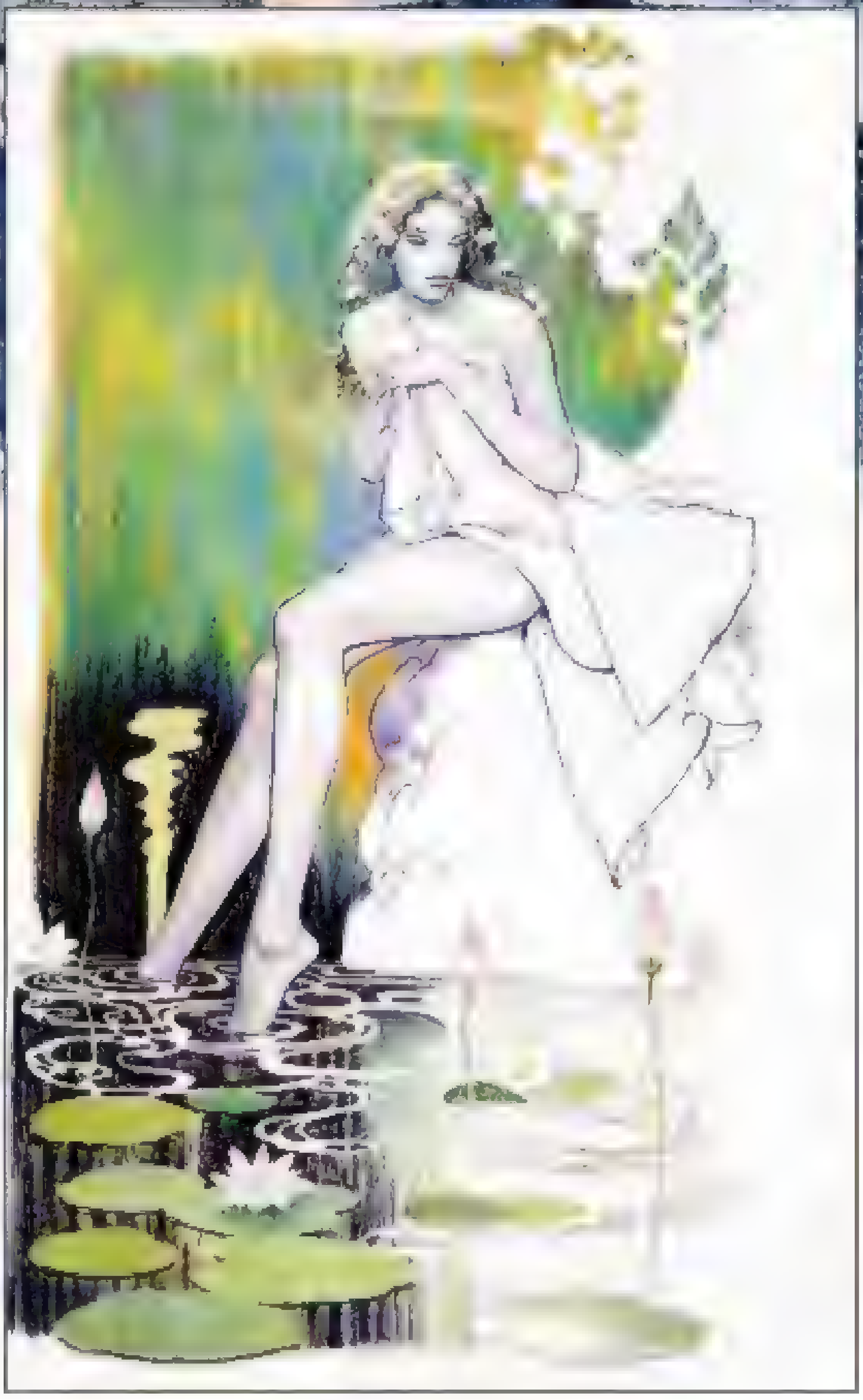
INSATIABLE

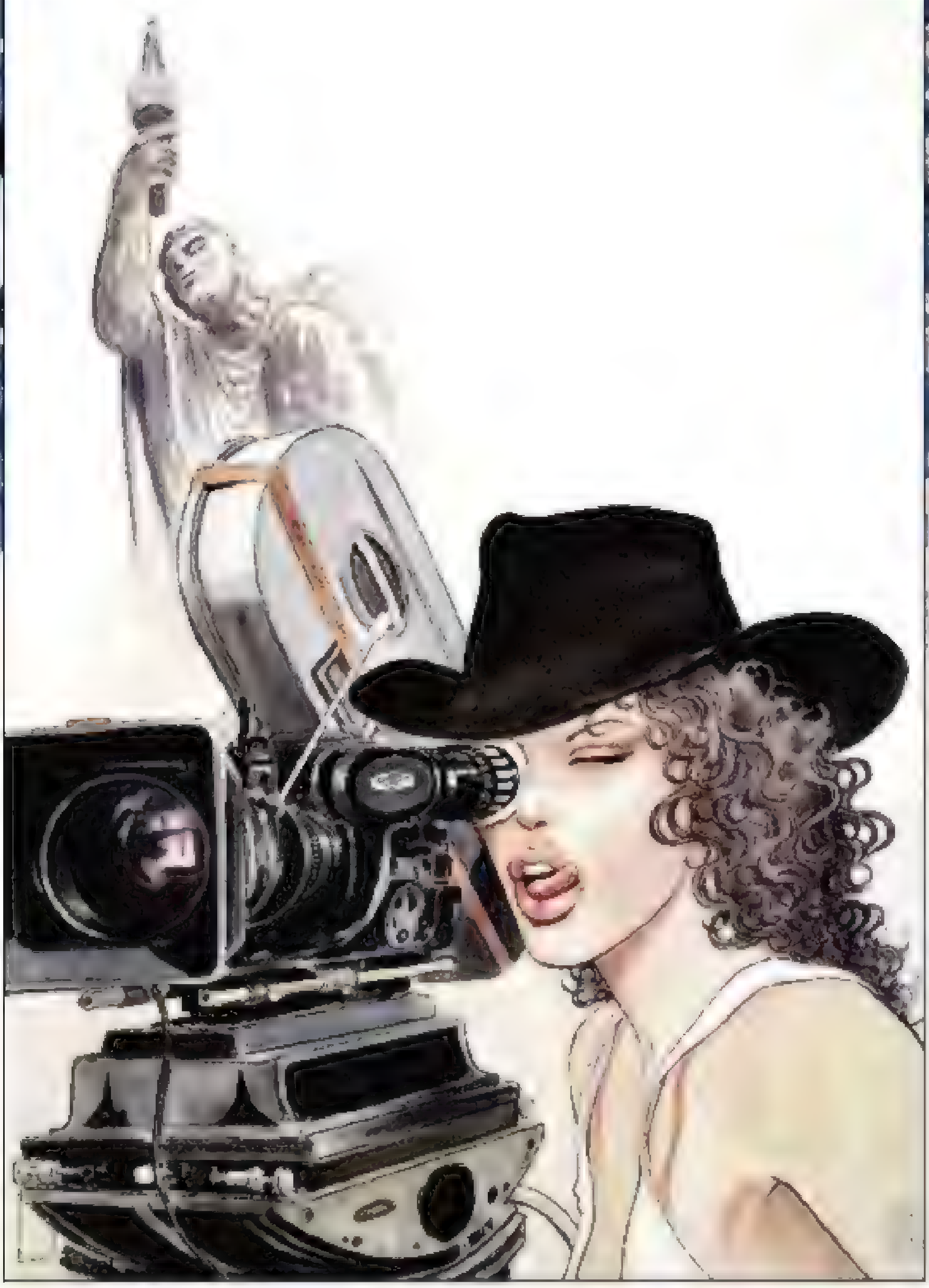
His growing international success was cemented in 1983 with the erotically charged series *Click!*, initially published in Italy in *Playmen* and in France in *L'Écho Des Savanes*. Manara has enormous fun here with a secret male fantasy of being able to control a woman's sexual appetite. He has a scientist implant a remote-controlled device into the brain of Claudia Cristiani, the beautiful, but dissatisfied young wife of an older millionaire. Now that her desires can be switched on and off at the 'click' of a dial, he can make her veer between frigid and insatiable. Thanks to Manara's elegant drawings of his ravishing leading lady, even the hottest scenes avoid becoming too explicit and *Click!* remains playful, absurd and hugely popular.

So where, we wonder, does the 'Manara woman', impossibly gorgeous and available, come from? "She doesn't correspond to a precise type," Manara smiles. "She is more the result of a mixture of all the women I have met, a sort of compendium of all the characteristics of female beauty, an archetype. My women represent what were once the 'types' in the old Commedia dell'Arte plays, whose masks represent different aspects of life." *Click!* ran for four albums and has been adapted into a French movie and a television series, but Manara agrees that there is something unique and captivating about their illustrated originals. "Unlike filmed images of reality, drawings always leave something to be interpreted by our imagination, which lets us make it closer to our own reality. I think that's the absolute power of comics, and erotica too. We we must never forget that the most important sex organ is still the brain!"

Next, Manara applied his brain to *Butterscotch* in 1986, another ridiculous concept of a magic skin cream that enables its geeky inventor to turn into a naked, invisible man to get closer to Honey, the woman of his dreams. The only drawback is that she can smell his cream's giveaway butterscotch

MANARA





ABOVE LEFT: This one's called 'Pannello'.

ABOVE RIGHT: Whatever can she be looking at? She seems to like it.

BELOW: The man himself, Milo Manara.

scent and decides to shame him in increasingly hilarious set-ups. For the reader, it's what we can't see but have to imagine that makes his escalating embarrassments so amusing and arousing. Manara wants to expose our hypocrisies and satirise our repressed desires and inhibitions. "It's clear that in most cases we're talking about pure entertainment, but for me comics have always been, first and foremost, a form of expression, and I've always tried to deal with some important subjects and convey some messages through my stories."

CHANGE OF STYLE

This was certainly true of his two brilliant collaborations with his fellow fumetti genius, the late, great Hugo Pratt (1927-1995), 18 years older than him. Looking back fondly, Manara describes Pratt as: "a colleague, a mentor, a friend, all these things, and much more. Working with him was an honour. I'm the only artist ever to draw Pratt's scripts, apart from himself. I'm particularly fond of *Indian Summer*, not only for my relationship with Pratt, but also because, with this story, I finally abandoned a style that no longer suited me."

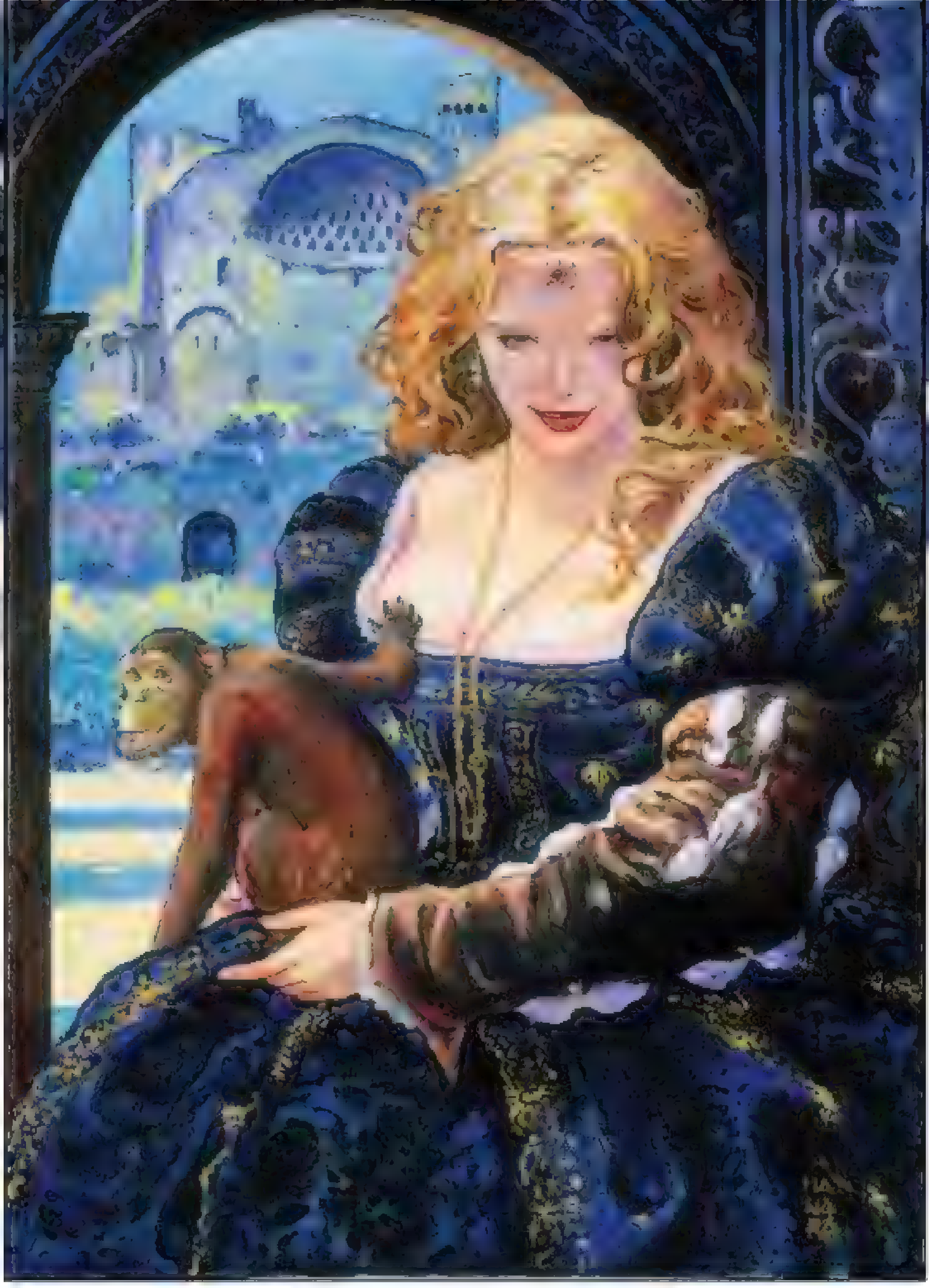
In 1983, Manara's transformed drawing captured life in 17th century New England and charted the fraught relationships and growing tensions over one hot summer between the so-called 'savage' Native Americans and upstanding Puritan settlers led by the zealous Reverend Pilgrim Black. Faithful to American colonial history and literature, Pratt researched the massacre of settlers in the village of New Canaan to write a gripping and sophisticated period drama of betrayal, intolerance and passion for Manara to illuminate with vivid realism and shimmering colours. Their partnership continued in 1991 on the equally beautiful and splendid *El Gaucho*, another historically rooted melodrama this time set in Argentina, where Pratt had lived and worked during his formative years.

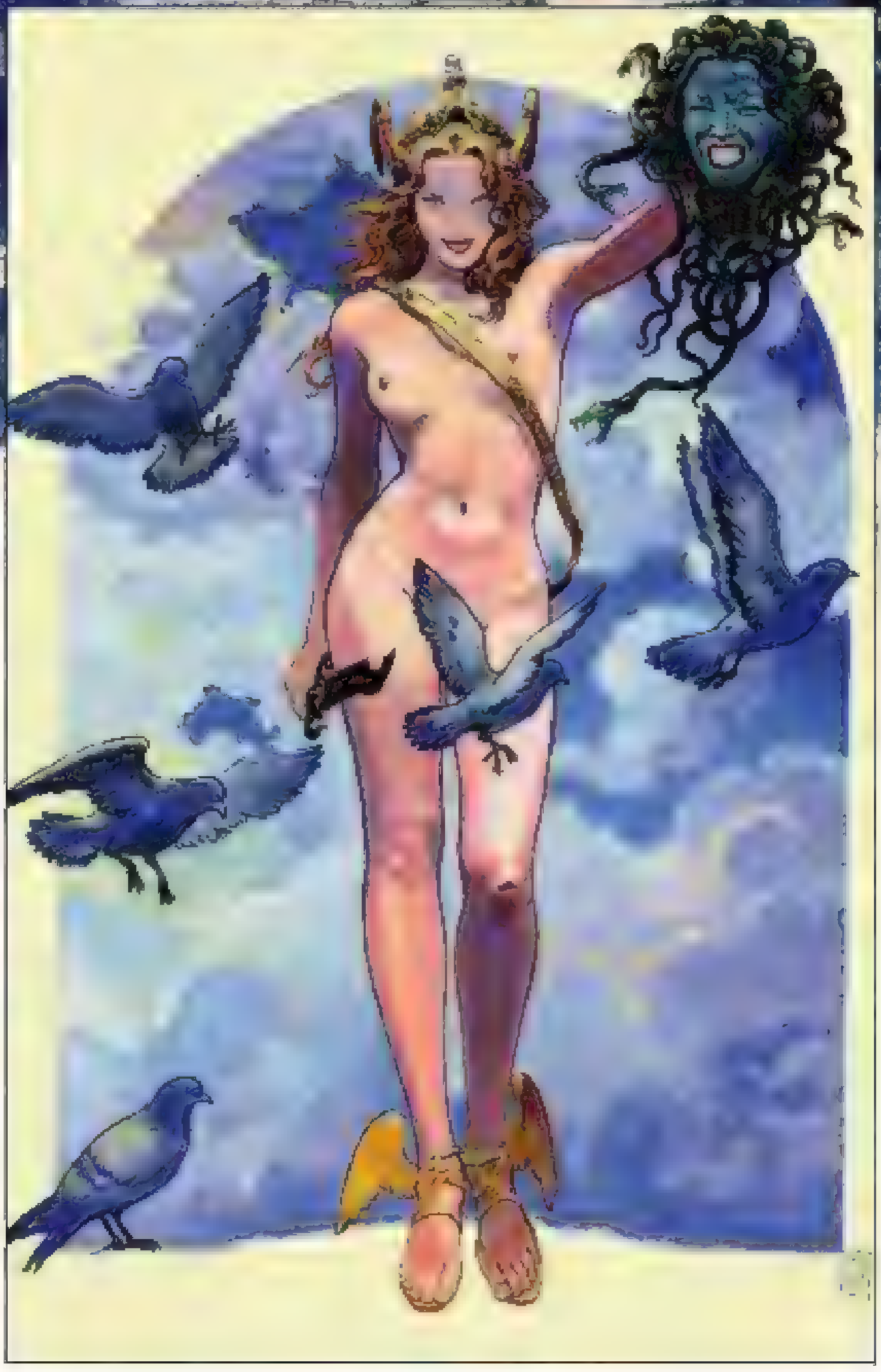
> "CENSORSHIP HAS NEVER BEEN THAT FREQUENT, AND I DON'T HAVE A BIG ISSUE WITH IT"

One controversial scene in *Indian Summer*, showing the corrupt Reverend Black taking advantage of one of his young female flock, resulted in it being censored in some editions. When I ask Manara whether he has any issues with the censoring of his comics, he tells me that, "Despite everything, censorship has never been that frequent, and I don't have a big issue with it. I understand the needs of publishers so we can find a balance. For example, at the moment in the United States, there's a real phobia of religion, so some details must be softened in some of my stories. The only serious censorship I suffered was of my *Bergman* stories in South Africa during the apartheid years, and politically I'm rather proud of that."

Manara's next major collaborations were with the celebrated film director Federico Fellini (1920-1993) in his final years. "I first met Fellini in 1985 after he called me and told me how much he liked my short story *Untitled*, which I had dedicated to him. Like Hugo Pratt, Fellini was another truly extraordinary man on the human and personal level, both were key teachers for me, for my life and my work." Fellini had always loved comics and drew his own; this informed how they developed the fanciful graphic novel *Viaggio a Tulum* (*Trip to Tulum*) together in 1986. "With Fellini, I worked in a very direct way, we met often and he gave me lots of very detailed storyboards for each page (he really enjoyed drawing), with shots, dialogue and so on. Throughout, he remained the director and I was only his cameraman."

Their sequel in 1992, *Il Viaggio di G Mastorna* (*The Voyage of G Mastorna*), was based on the film that Fellini had famously tried to make throughout most of his career, even referring to it in *Eight And A Half*, but never succeeded. Instead, he and Manara began





converting it into comics. Unfortunately, when the first part was compiled into a book, a printing error put the word 'End' on the last page. His leading man, Mastorna, had died in the first part, but Fellini planned to chronicle his journeys after death in the next two parts. However, in these circumstances, the superstitious Fellini, in poor health and near death himself, decided to stop his story there. So, tantalisingly, one of the world's most famous unfilmed movies was also left unfinished as a comic.

Manara has worked with another visionary director, the Chilean-born maverick Alejandro Jodorowsky, notably on a bawdy historical saga on the Borgia family of poisoners. The fourth and final album has just been published in impressive full colour. Manara admits, "I've hardly ever met Jodorowsky, maybe only twice in six years! His scripts are as detailed as Fellini's but he leaves me a lot of artistic freedom." Manara has also illustrated *Le Feu Aux Entrailles* (*Fire in The Entrails*), the French edition of a 1982 novel written by provocative Spanish film director Pedro Almódovar.

Manara has been equally active in the field of literature, both classic and contemporary. From the past, he has transformed Jonathan Swift's giant Gulliver into a woman as Gullvera, adapted the 1896 novel *Aphrodite* by French writer Pierre Louÿs, and interpreted such ancients texts as *The Golden Ass* by Apuleius and love-making manual *The Kama Sutra*. One of the most notable living authors he has worked with is Neil Gaiman, initially in 1990 on a short piece for the anthology *Breakthrough*, dealing with the fall of the Berlin Wall, and then in 2004 in *The Sandman: Endless Nights*, in which he was a perfect choice to visualise that most alluring member of The Endless, Desire.

MANARA MARVEL

There have been attempts to turn Manara's drawings into animation. In 2006 he designed the characters for the Argentinian television series *City Hunters*. Combining animation with CGI, this 'branded entertainment' of nine- to 11-minute episodes was co-produced by Unilver to promote its male grooming products in Latin America.

Another much more interesting animation opportunity is keeping Manara busy at the moment. "I'm now working on a big 3D-HD animation project, the life story of Adriano Celentano, a well-known Italian singer and performer, in 26 half-hour episodes produced by the Murdoch satellite station Sky, the only real competitor for Berlusconi's channels in Italy." Among those involved in *Il Ragazzo Della Via Gluck* (*The Boy from Gluck Street*) is novelist and screenwriter Vincenzo Cerami, who was also an assistant director to Pasolini in the '60s. Cerami and Manara have previously worked together on a graphic novel thriller, *Pandora's Eyes* in 2007, which is coming out, at last, in English.

And what future solo projects does Manara have in mind? "As soon as possible, I'd finally like to devote myself to a project I care about a lot: the biography of the painter Caravaggio, told through the eyes of one of his models, Fillide." Before he has to leave, I ask him how he found his experience at Marvel. "Despite having to fully immerse myself to produce the *X-Women* project, I'm not a passionate reader of American comic books, so I had no precise idea about the market. The concept of superheroes has never really interested me. I have always preferred European comics." Still, having illustrated some superheroines, were there any others he might be interested in drawing? Can we start imagining his voluptuous visualisations of Elektra, Sheena, or maybe Modesty Blaise? "I don't know, perhaps Modesty Blaise because she already has a sexy side to her personality. I'm not averse to challenges, so who knows, one day I might find myself working on a story about Wonder Woman, why not?"

Now that's a revamp of the Amazon princess many would dearly love to see! DC Comics, are you listening?

ABOVE LEFT: Lucrezia Borgia herself, rendered in the inimitable Manara style. Nice monkey

ABOVE RIGHT: Persea, presumably a female version of Perseus, having just slain Medusa the Gorgon.

■ Paul Gravett can't start the New Year without a trip to the Angoulême International Comics Festival. This year's annual pilgrimage will be his 26th, maybe a record? Full report next issue.

The Adventures of Luther Arkwright
by Bryan Talbot
Michael Moorcock

THE ADVENTURES OF LUTHER ARKWRIGHT

BRYAN TALBOT 1978-1989

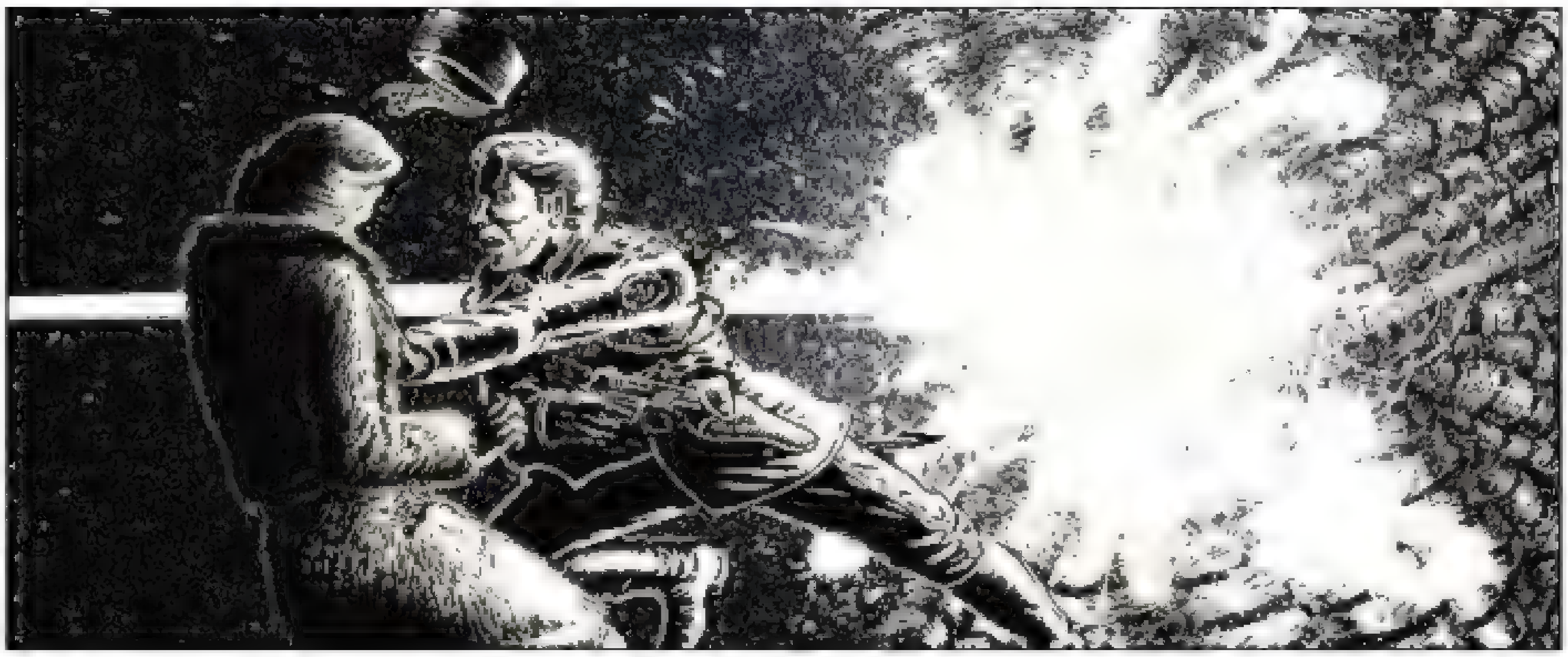
A masterfully detailed monochrome saga about a multiversal messiah figure. By **Daniel Etherington**

Before it was published as a collected edition by Dark Horse in 1997, *The Adventures of Luther Arkwright* (*TAOLA*) slowly took form between 1978 and 1989. It's no wonder it took a while since this is an extraordinarily dense, all-encompassing comic. Literally, in fact, as its story plays out on numerous 'parallels' of the multiverse, each with a different variant of human history. Much of the action takes place in England, on parallel 00.72.87 – a place where there was no Restoration in 1660, and instead the Cromwell line remained at the head of the Commonwealth.

In the story's 1980s present day setting, the Lord Protector is Nathaniel Cromwell, a self-righteous, vicious pervert who heads up a Puritan police state where the Royalists are revolutionaries. Nationalism is a strong theme – within the revolutionary forces are groups such as the IRA ('Irish Royalist Army') and the 'Royalist Liberation Front'. Their names are, of course, steeped in irony, reflecting the leftist groups of the era that gave rise to Bryan Talbot's masterpiece.

Talbot had started out working in the underground comix scene, a pop culture expression of 1960s counterculture, and the *Luther Arkwright* saga has a deliciously subversive tone that evolved from this background. With the comic, which, between 1987 and 1989, was published completely as nine issues, Talbot went on a creative rampage through not just pulp and pop culture, but art history, classic British SF and fantasy, history, philosophy, religion and its close relative, mythology. It's a comic that will make your jaw drop and leave you feeling spent. Fans of the medium acclaim it as among Talbot's finest work, but by rights, it should have also achieved the mainstream recognition of Moore's *Watchmen*. Indeed, it could be said that what *Watchmen* did for the medium by way of American comics, *TAOLA* does for the medium by way of British history. Furthermore, the title neatly spans the gap between Michael Moorcock and the British SF he spearheaded via *New Worlds* magazine (and his own multiverse fiction) and the 1980s flowering of the comic book.

ABOVE: Sir Bryan of Talbot himself. He's one of our faves here at *Comic Heroes*.



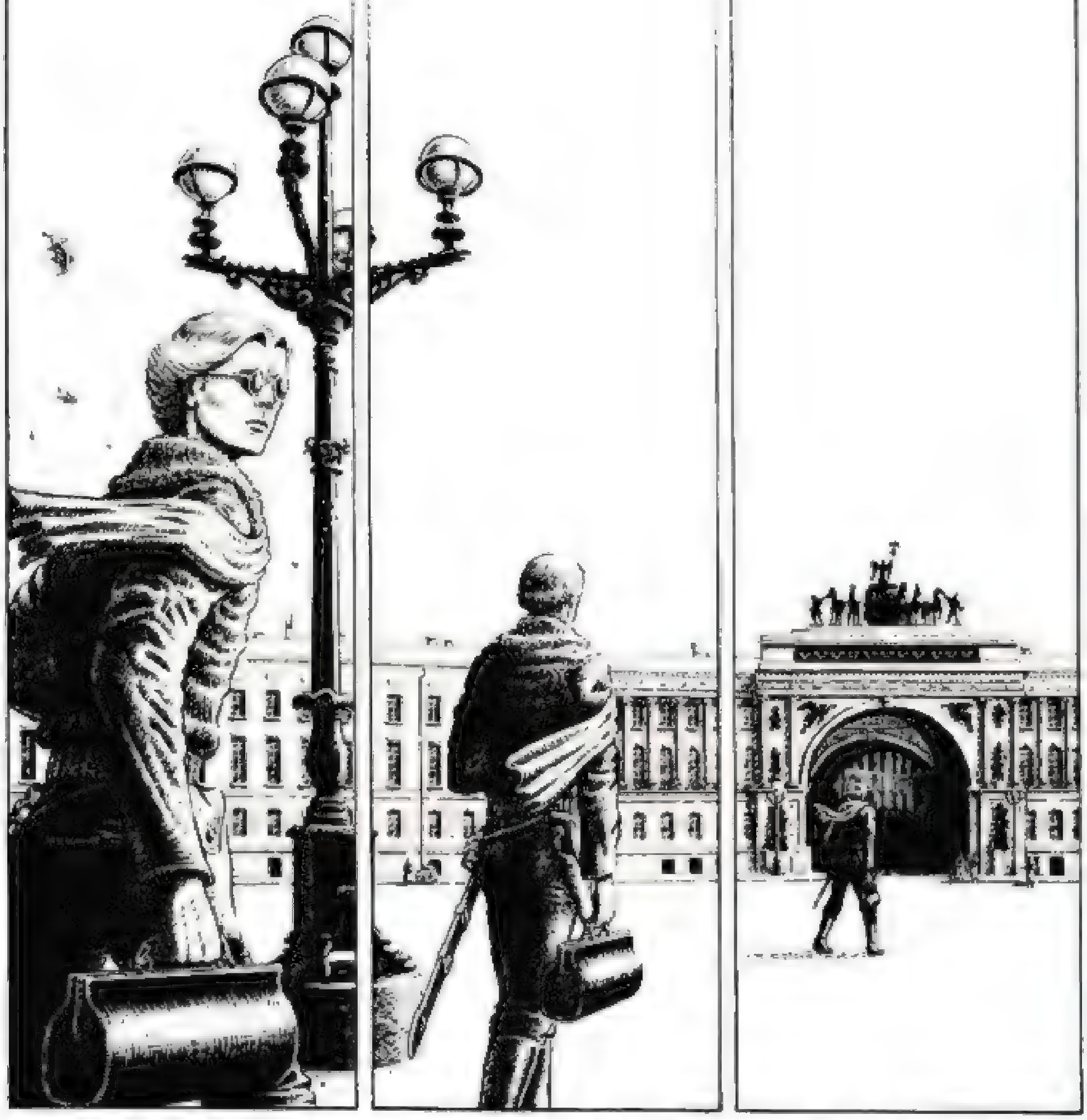
BELOW: Assassination averted! Love the fur coat, there.

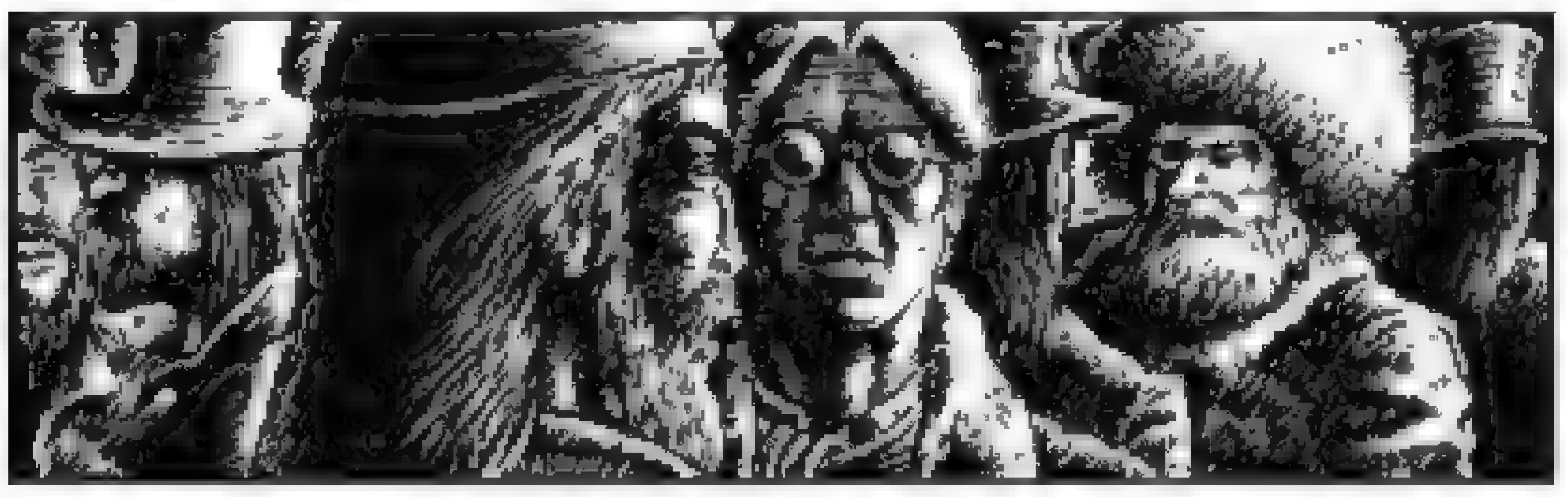
Images © Dark Horse

Arkwright himself is a character who's part James Bond, part Doc Savage, part Doctor Manhattan and part, well, Jesus. With a bad haircut. As the story begins, he appears to be a kind of secret agent, who's involved in an incident that, in parallel 00.38.56, results in the accidental burning down of the Crystal Palace and the Bayeux Tapestry. Whoops. In many ways, *TAOLA* is the prototype for much of what Talbot would do in later work, weaving together diverse influences and elements into a rich fabric. For example, in one frame he juxtaposes a sword beheading from the tapestry with a reworking of Eddie Adams's iconic 1968 photography of a young Vietcong being shot in head. That's just one of the many nods. He's clearly strongly influenced by Hogarth and, as he would years later in *Grandville*, he even recreates a famous Manet image (see if you can spot it!).

After the Crystal Palace incident, the saga slowly unfolds, and we learn more about both Arkwright and an enemy that's threatening the entire galaxy, if not the multiverse. This enemy is the Disruptors, whose shock troops are glimpsed as they go about finding an ancient doomsday weapon called Firefrost. This, we learn, was "created to be the ultimate deterrent" by an ancient civilisation and has the power "to disrupt the atomic structure of the cosmic blueprint".

Arkwright is a unique being who can move between the parallel universes, and works with the forces of the technologically advanced, stable





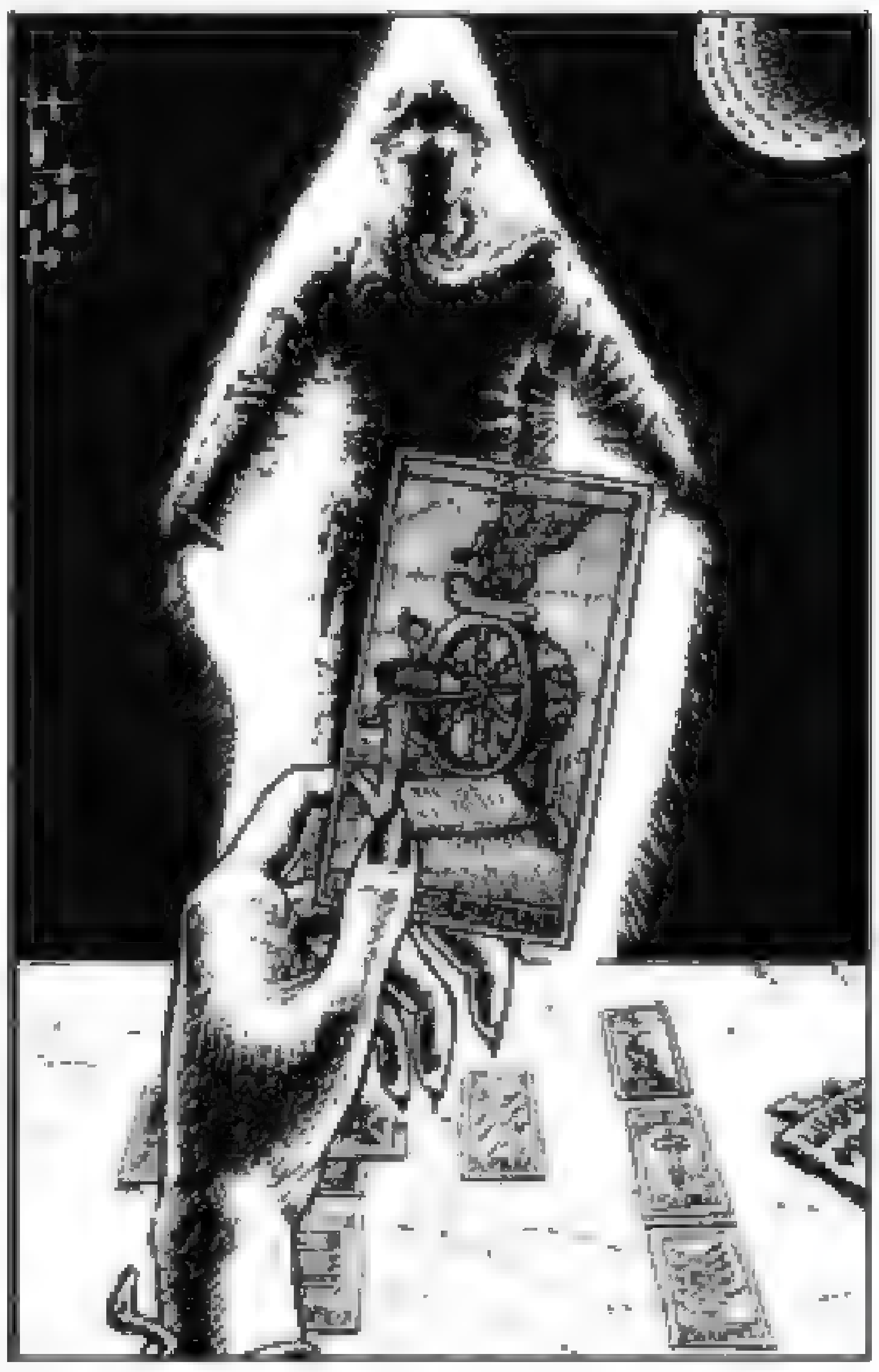
> "A CREATIVE RAMPAGE THROUGH NOT JUST PULP AND POP CULTURE, BUT ART HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY"

parallel 00.00.00 ('Zero Zero'), with their supercomputer WOTAN, to try and halt the Disruptors' plans. Among the other Zero Zero agents is Rose Wylde, who has an empathic/telepathic connection with all multiversal versions of herself. Rose is (or rather, are) one of Luther's lovers; another is Octobriana, a formidable mono-browed Russian warrior, a character created in an early '70s hoax by Czech Peter Sadecký.

The Disruptors have been manipulating humanity, but the multi-dimensional war is coming to a head on 00.72.87, where the Royalist forces are massing behind the pregnant Princess Anne; Prussian and Russian powers are circling like vultures; Cromwell is becoming increasingly addled by venereal disease; and Hiram Kowolsky, foreign correspondent and war artist of the New Amsterdam Herald in the United Colonies of America, is relaying news of the Royalist cause to fellow revolutionaries abroad.

While Talbot's style has evolved since *TAOLA*, which, at times, is cluttered and reliant on tranches of text, and some elements of the comic are dated (that haircut for starters), it remains a hugely rewarding read. It's adult, epic, experimental, refreshingly British and endlessly fascinating. Oh, and if you read it for the first time and enjoy it, you can find out more about what happens in 00.72.87 in 1999's colour sequel, *Heart of Empire*. CH

TOP: Luther Arkwright wanders through some of Bryan Talbot's gorgeous art. His style has evolved over the years, but there's no denying the detail and atmosphere on offer.



NEXT ISSUE: Alex Ross and Mark Waid's *Kingdom Come*!

WHAT YOU THOUGHT...

Bryan Talbot's output never ceases to amaze and this is one of his finest works. A complex and highly original tale, illustrated in exquisite detail. Absolutely superb.
Craig Mitchell

So dense, so layered, so ahead of its time. Pre-internet (remember that?) I spent weeks traipsing around dusty back issue boxes, looking for the episodes printed by the slew of publishers the title had and reading them piecemeal. Best read in one sitting, a true novel. Beats its sequel hands down. Still the best thing that Talbot has done. More than *Watchmen* or *Dark Knight*, this comic demonstrates the true potential of the medium.
Luke Williams

Defining Steampunk before most people even knew what Steampunk was, *Luther Arkwright* is the disturbing, broiling gyre where the mainstream and the underground meet in British comics. Breathtaking in its scope, stunning in its detail and ruthless in its message, *Arkwright* is the closest thing to a unique vision that is possible to get.
Michael Molcher

Every comics fan has his or her formative influences, the masterworks that showed what could be done with the form and blew open the doors of perception. *The Adventures of Luther Arkwright* – along with Mills and O'Neill's *Nemesis the Warlock* – was one of mine, a mind-bending and deeply atmospheric work that still stands alone. Remarkably, its sequel, the lushly detailed *Heart of Empire* – which we'll look at in a future *Comic Heroes* – is every bit its equal, although it remains criminally under-appreciated.
Jes Bickham

Talbot would go on to do things like the delicate, beautiful and harrowing *Tale of One Bad Rat* and the fascinating psycho-geography of *Alice In Sunderland*, but *The Adventures of Luther Arkwright* is still pretty damn brilliant. It's a very English type of science fiction, firmly in the tradition of Moorcock, but Talbot's amazing art gives the story its own particular flavour. I read it when it first came out and it's still one of my favourite ever comics.
Hugh Everett

I have to say, I found this very hard going. Perhaps the comics of today have changed the way I look at and read comics, but reading *Luther Arkwright* for the first time, I found it really dense and heavy going. I can't deny that it looks like a million dollars – Talbot's one of those immediately distinctive artists, a world away from all the interchangeable superhero stuff we get these days - but be prepared to put some real effort in with this.
Josh Smith

Everything Bryan Talbot does is brilliant, but, to me, he's yet to better this. A complete classic.
Annie Britt

GET INVOLVED

Do you want to be part of Comic Club? Then let us know your comments by emailing us at comic.heroes@futurenet.com or going to our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/ComicHeroes.

1
TEL MA
CRESCENT
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HAVEN

Artist Profile

INFO
Mixes comics interior work with cover illustrations in a pulp style

LOCATION
United States

WEBSITE
www.kaluta.com

THE ART OF... Michael Wm Kaluta

Best known for drawing pulp hero The Shadow and creepy comics such as DC's *House Of Mystery*, **Michael Kaluta** is a master of channelling the classics through a modern artistic lens. **Joel Meadows** tracked him down...

COMIC HEROES: Who were the major influences on your style as an artist?

MICHAEL WM KALUTA: One of my earliest concepts of what it was to draw and paint came from a television programme in the States, called *John Gnagy Learn To Draw*, back in the '50s. He concentrated on drawing perspective and composition a lot, then made pictures out of the basics. That was informative stuff. Then, when I became aware of people who drew cool things, I started looking at line drawings by Roy G Krenkel and Frank Frazetta on the title pages of the Edgar Rice Burroughs Ace paperbacks, published in the early '60s. I didn't try to paint like the covers – I had no concept of how to make paint look like anything but paint – but the line drawings were like guides, making it easy for me to try to make up my own pictures. You can also add Al Williamson and Will Eisner to my early influences. Along with those fellas, I was particularly impressed with the illustrations that accompanied the L Frank Baum *Oz* books, by John R Neill, and the work of Aubrey Beardsley. Those apt influences had me becoming a dedicated pen-and-ink guy.

CH: Early on in your career, you shared a studio with luminaries such as Barry Windsor-Smith, Jeffrey Jones and Berni Wrightson. How did this come about?

MK: When I first came to NYC, I was sharing a room with Berni Wrightson in a very small place. Then Berni and I got an apartment in Jeff Jones's building, two blocks north on West 79th street. Berni and I were on the lease but we had folks like Alan Weiss, Mary Skrenes and Steve Harper coming and living for months at a time. A few years later, after I moved into my own place, word came to me through Berni that Barry Windsor-Smith was looking to share a studio. So Berni and Barry went looking for a good space. Eventually, they got Jeffrey Jones to search along with them. They found a great place, the 12th floor in a garment district building in Chelsea. I was bugged by Berni and Jeffrey to join up, but it'd cost an extra 100 bucks, which I couldn't afford. Around that time, my friend Charles Vess graduated from my old college, albeit a few years after I'd left. I asked him about what he was planning to do with his life. He said: "My parents want me to go back to Lynchburg, Virginia to open up an art store." When I asked if he wanted to do that he said, "Absolutely not." So Charles moved into the fifth floor walk-up, and for the next three years he had the whole apartment while I camped out in the studio. His rent paid for my rent at The Studio.

CH: The first comic book series that brought your art to public attention was DC's *The Shadow* with Denny O'Neil. What was the appeal?

MK: The appeal was having a real comic book to work on! I hadn't read *The Shadow* pulps and I hadn't read the actual *Shadow* stories (Pyramid Books were the paperback publishers of the actual Maxwell Grant/Walter Gibson stories at that time). However, I had read one or two of the Belmont paperbacks – 'new' stories that had nothing to do with the original *Shadow* pulps other than they had the same name. So I had a jaundiced idea of what the character was about. Although I'd seen pictures and I knew the radio programme just from osmosis, I had to ask my pal Steve Hickman to fill me in on the whats and whys of the real character.

Doing a 20-page comic book was an opportunity I hadn't expected. DC Comics was looking for someone to draw *The Shadow*. I figured that Denny O'Neil could have given the job to any number of well-established guys. Jim Steranko wanted to do it, but apparently he wanted to write it himself (company policy didn't allow any writer/artists). Alex Toth was considered, but he wanted a film writer friend to script it and DC couldn't handle that. Denny's choice was Jim Aparo, but

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Kaluta Gallery

1 The Shadow

When asked to do a comic book based in a real-world environment, I take one of two approaches to getting into the work. The most immediate and fun way is to rely on my memory and inner eye: old films, TV, old illustrations and photos remembered from my younger days, all used as inspiration and the sole reference for the job. With *The Shadow*, I'd had enough of the above as a kid to dive deeply into the world The Shadow inhabited. Whatever lacked accuracy was made up for in style! If you've ever seen the original *Plastic Man*, *Police Comics* and Will Eisner's *The Spirit*, you know a real feeling of place can be attained without a trip to the New York Historical Society.

But, the second way, which always haunts my approach, is to use the above as a jumping off place, then research the heck out of everything, even to the point of details that won't affect the story (are there really cobblestones between the trolly tracks in Times Square circa 1938?). I can kill a deadline by getting too fixated on making certain my look and feel are really accurate (this can also lead to disagreements with the writer).

A blessing of the second approach is that next time I have to do a comic book story set in the same time period, all that research work is now part of my inner eye and memory, adding to the feeling of reality without me having to study up again.

This *Shadow* commission is the sum total of every other *Shadow* job I did since 1973, but I didn't have to reference anything so it was pure fun.

CYCLE 140
ANARCHERA
THE DOWNSTAIRS STUDIO OF
NORRIS REX'S WAX
MUSEUM EMPORIUM~
2 VALE of TIERS
REC STATION 97
WHAT A PARTY IT WILL BE, EH, MY DARLING JOAN? SOCIETY MEETS HISTORY MEETS ART!
"YOU'RE AN INTERESTING HUMANOID," RASPED NY GEL AS HE SLID THE TITANIUM BRACELETS OVER HER SLENDER WRISTS, "BUT ART DOESN'T NEED TO THINK."
--WAX ZOMBIES OF THE NOH ZONE by Hugo Award Winning Author RONNIE LEE ELLIS
I'VE BROUGHT YOUR GUILLOTINE, NORRIS, AND I HOPE...
BIP
SPOOF
PHSSST
POIT
I'VE RETHOUGHT THE CENTERPIECE, ROLAND.
MARIE ANTOINETTE'S BEEN DONE TO DEATH! I NEED SOMETHING "NOW"!
I'M SEEING SOMETHING CONTEMPORARY...
JOAN of ARK
MAID of NEW ORLEAN
POP
PIP
SPLUK
BLUP
POOOO
CRASH!!
...AND AT THE SAME TIME ARCHETYPAL!
I'M SEEING DOG-WOMEN WITH SPEARS!
POOF
POIT
PONK
SPLURT
UPSIDE, ON THE VALE OF TIERS...
SPLOOK!
S OF BEAS
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THROW IT AWAY!
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CAT

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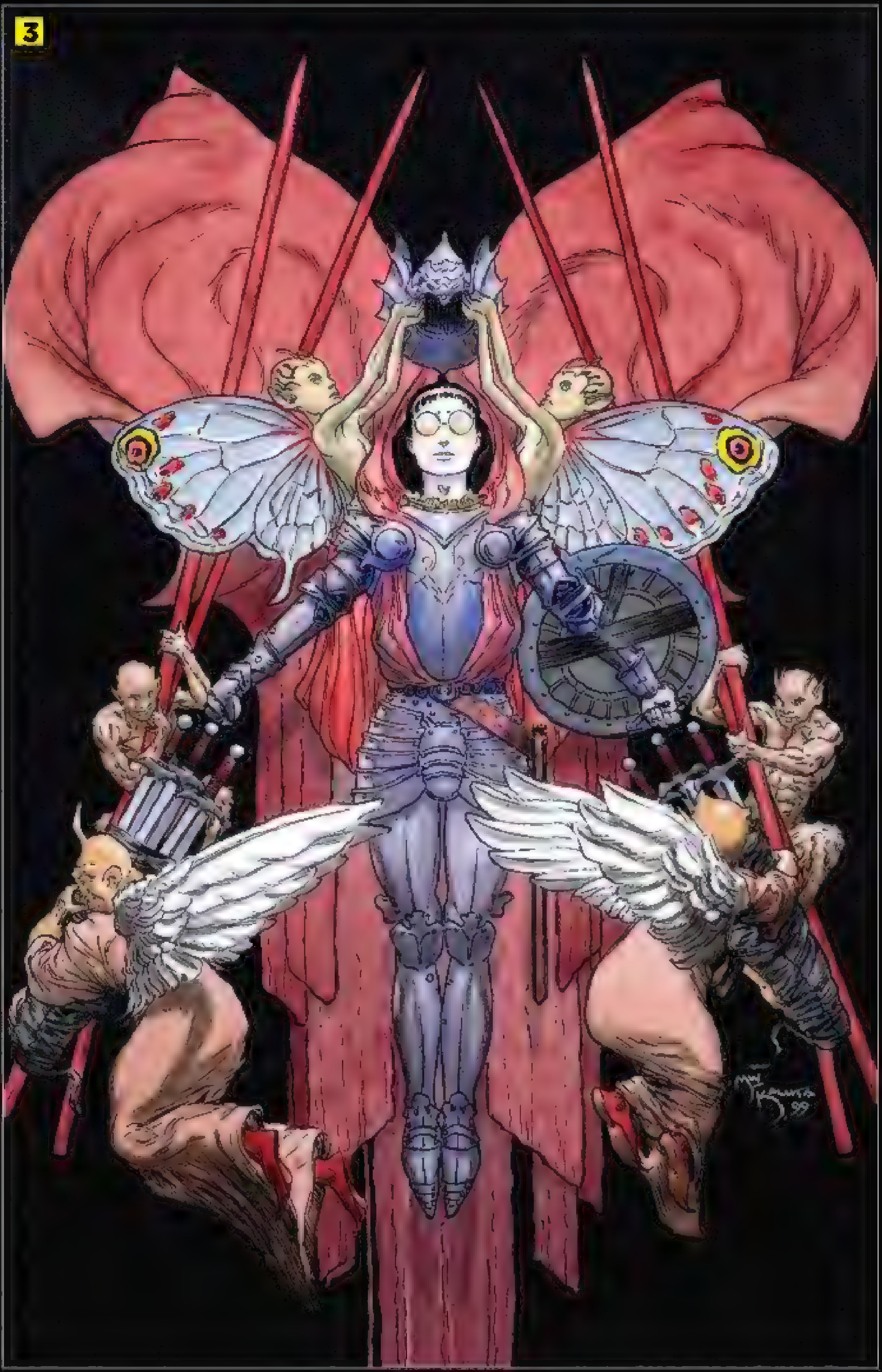


Jim was drawing almost everything at DC at the time. Once I understood the book was open, I asked Denny in the coffee room of DC Comics if I could draw it. He got up, left, came back and said, "Okay."

***CH:* You returned to the character twice. Once at Marvel with *Hitler's Astrologer* and more briefly with a new story in DC's *Private Files Of The Shadow* hardcover. Do you feel you have unfinished business with The Shadow?**

MK: Make that three times – don't forget the work at Dark Horse! Making sense of the film when doing the adaptation was something Joel Goss and I were very proud of. The Shadow can be a really fun character to draw and the time period was something that I had, and continue to have, an affinity for. I'm up for more Shadow work anytime!

Kaluta Gallery

2 Starstruck

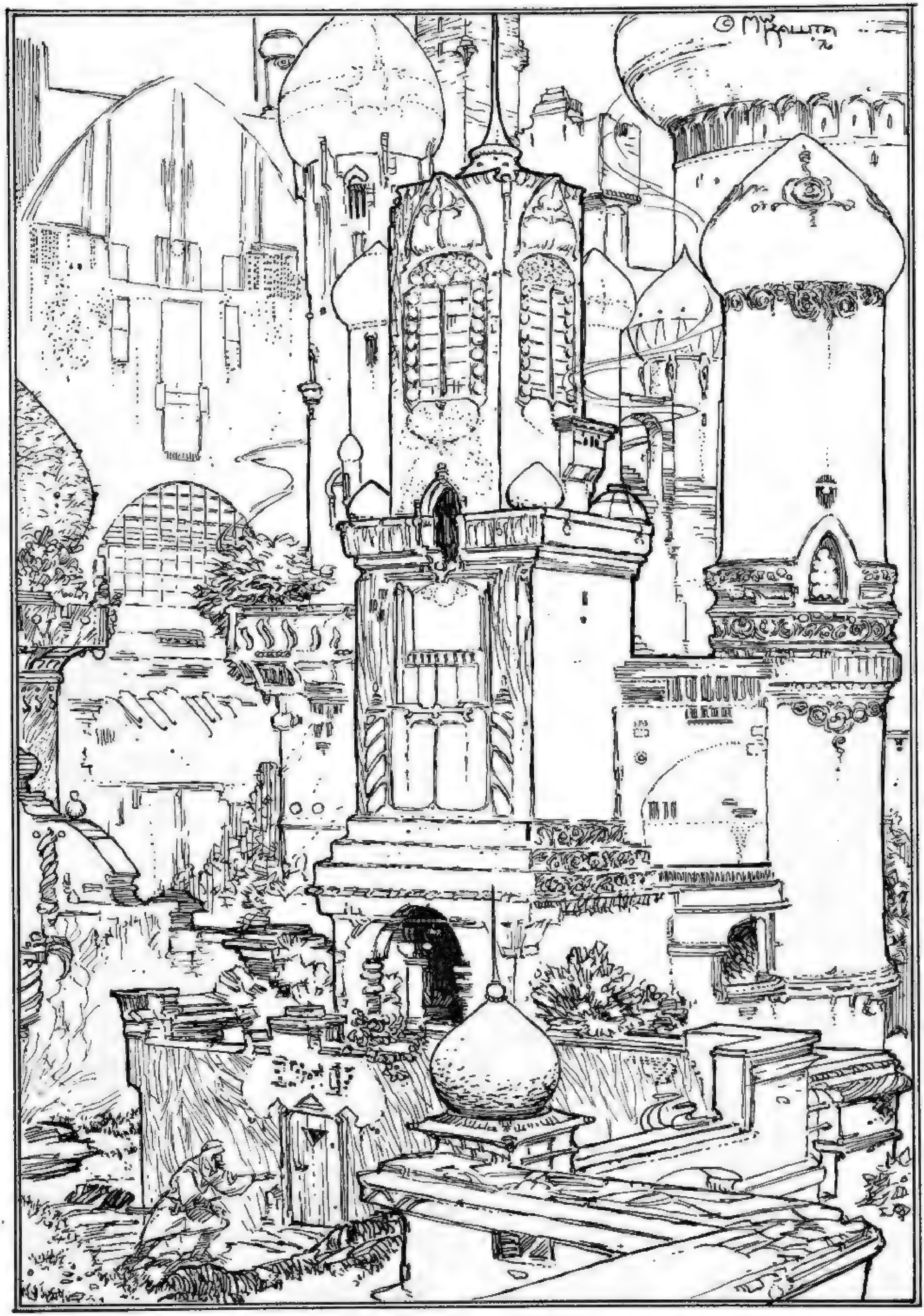
Working on the *Starstruck* graphic novel and various Epic and Dark Horse comic books allowed me to mine the other huge mental collection of everything I saw, heard, read, sung and did from birth until 1980 (and beyond). Blending SF stories with Wild West TV shows and *Dennis The Menace* cartoons, I went to town designing, creating and otherwise illuminating Elaine Lee's script. The odd thing was having carte blanche to make it up as I went along. Once I did make something up, I had to stick with it – it became historical. So, when I had to draw Rah El Rex carrying a guillotine into his brother's wax lab, I could make up the guillotine, the stairs and the melted wax cauldron, but I had to go and see how I'd made Rah El Rex look in earlier episodes by visiting my inner Kaluta Historical Society. If I ever had to draw the wax lab again, this new page was now part of my *Britannica* – a very odd sensation – "How did I draw that?"

Luckily for me, I'd made up everything visual in the *Starstruck* world, so I could both be a bug about getting it right and adapting what I remember doing and chalking it up to creative evolving of character – after all, people in *Starstruck*, unlike the big superhero titles, got to change their clothes every now and then.

3 Comic Book Cover: The Books Of Magic

There's no hard and fast rule for doing a comic book cover, especially a modern one. You need to intrigue the new reader and reward the dedicated one as well. With covers for well-established characters, known for years, you can play to the expected strengths of that character (Batman and a Batarang, Thor and his hammer, Madame Xanadu and lots of beautiful, creepy things) or play against the known strengths (my first *Detective Comics* cover showed Batman on a tall smokestack aiming a high-powered sniper rifle at who-knows-what). I've enjoyed nearly every cover I've done, and hope to do many more. Each is a challenge – you have to make it good for sales, good for the reader, please the writer and editor and then yourself (always hoping that pleasing yourself will please everyone).

The Books Of Magic gave me a wide field to play in. This piece is one of my favourites – it combines everything I learned from all of my first inspirations (Mucha, Beardsley, Frazetta, Williamson, etc) while tipping my beret to medieval religious icons, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, J C Leyendeker, Howard Pyle (the other HP) and my friend Steve Hickman's SF book cover art.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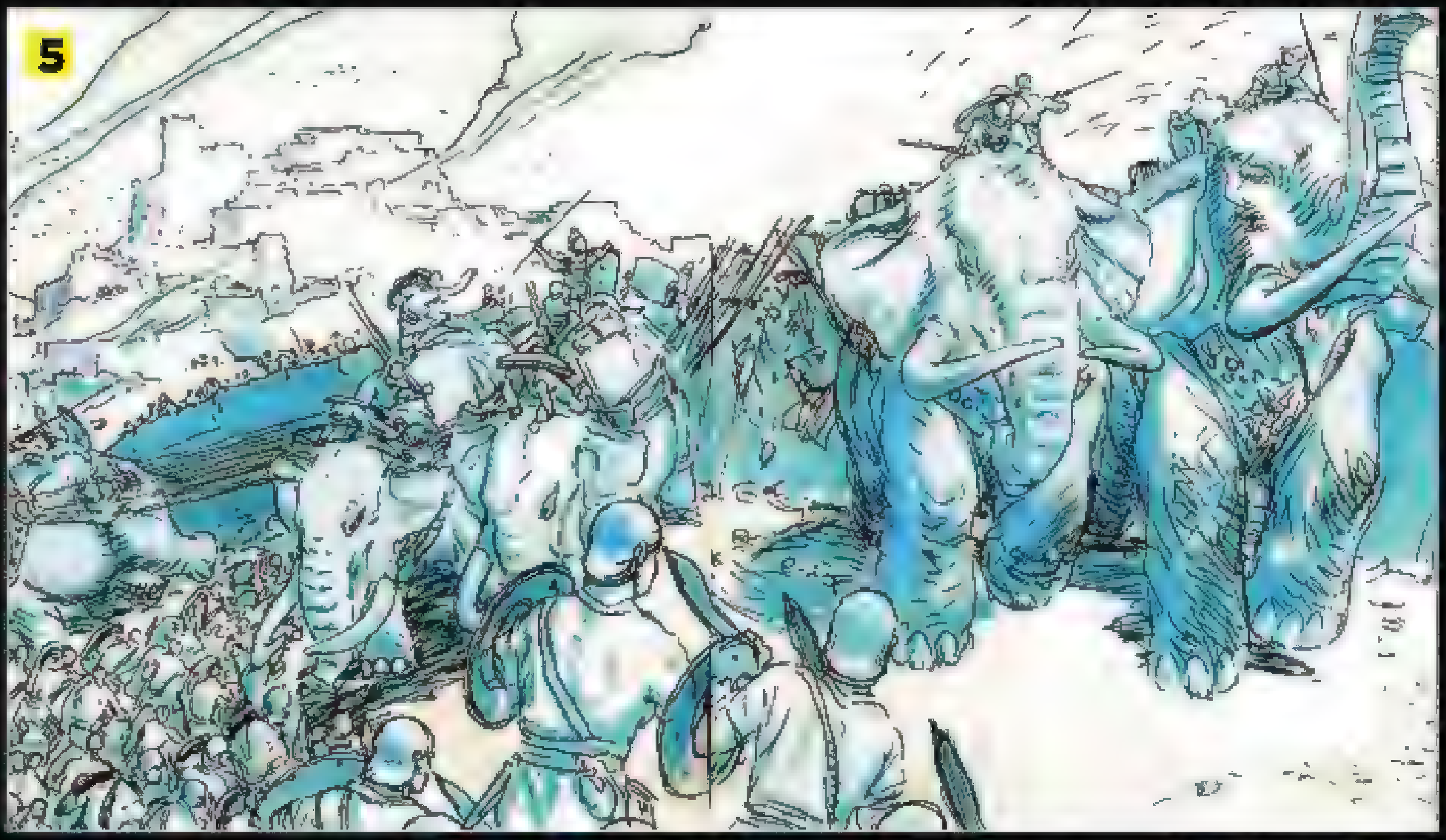

CH: **At one point, you were also pretty much a regular cover artist on DC's *House Of Mystery* and *House Of Secrets* titles. It's no secret that you're a huge admirer of EC's seminal titles, so did this feel like an opportunity to express that love?**
MK: EC had some really hot covers from artists like Wally Wood and some terrific Al Williamson ones, all of which raised the bar I was trying to leap over. The majority of the EC covers are still cool, because of their nostalgia appeal, but I wouldn't want to try to do a Jack Davis-like cover. I don't have the affinity for it. The same goes for Ghastly Graham Ingels. My horror approach is much more in the vein of Norman Rockwell than Graham Ingels.

CH: ***Starstruck* seems to have had a longevity past many of its contemporaries. What is it that's kept the series of interest to the reading public?**
MK: I think it's because the more you read it, the more you find in it. It's very dense. With the newly released IDW series and the soon to hit the stands compilation book, the entire story is laid end to end for reading and enjoyment. It was a great thing that *Starstruck* was first presented in *Heavy Metal* magazine – it made the story available to quite a wide audience, but, although it was a great venue, they chopped the chapters up to meet its page demands, making our dense story even denser.

CH: **In recent years, you've become better known as a cover artist in comics. How conscious a decision was this?**
MK: It was definitely conscious. I was born to illustrate. When I came to comics initially, I thought of them as separate images put together in a string. This is wrong, wrong, wrong. I learned to tell a comic book story properly in my early years at DC Comics. But, once I was given a cover job, it was like I got back to illustration again.

CH: **As well as comics, you've done a lot of illustration work, but you do seem to return to drawing comics every now and again. Are comics a medium that you still have a great fondness for?**
MK: Oh yes. You can't tell a story in illustrations the way you can a comic book story. The most gratifying delight in doing a comic book story is coming up with a way to show something in the script that relies more on your artistic timing than it does on the fact that you may be able to draw a really beautiful woman or a nice explosion.

CH: **What is your actual process when drawing these days?**
MK: The art is drawn physically on paper or board, finished and then scanned. If there's something in my finish that's bothering me, like, say, an eye that's out of place, I'll go into Photoshop and manipulate it so it's sitting where it should. Once scanned and tweaked, the art is sent to the client via FTP or a mailed CD/DVD.

CH: **In 2009, you returned to a character you hadn't drawn in some time, Madame Xanadu. How did it feel coming back to a creation associated with an earlier period in your career?**
MK: It was terrific. The real difference was that the character I was returning to was now fully defined. When I first 'met' Madame Xanadu, Joe Orlando and Paul Levitz said to me, "Yeah, we're going to do a mystery book and we need a hostess. The stories are set in Greenwich Village so give us some good witchy woman ideas." I drew Madame Xanadu out of 'whole cloth' using Cathy Ann Thiele's face and plenty of attitude! But there was no back story for me to pull inspiration from while designing her. When, in 2009, I got to work on the new series, Matt Wagner had created a whole history for the character, defining her life from being a child up to and past the point where I had originally designed her. My Matt Wagner story arc took place in '40s New York City and Spain in the time of the Inquisition.

CH: **You've always been associated with the pulpier end of comics, fictional creations and also gothic material. Why do you think they still engage readers today?**
MK: Well, it's because it's like real life with shadows. I think the appeal of the pulp/gothic/adventure story is that it's a type of hyper-drama. To me an adventure story, particularly a pulp adventure story, makes the heart beat faster, hence a more alive feeling.

Kaluta Gallery

4 Illustration: Robert E Howard

Unlike drawing a comic book, where my art defines the story, I believe my task as a book and story illustrator is to augment the written word, perhaps enhancing mood or adding detail that might otherwise go wanting in the particular scene. Done well, illustrations enhance without taking over – a tough thing to do. Ideally, the art reinforces the story, without grating against the imagery the reader develops for themselves. It's a scary brief. Just typing this scares the heck out of me!

Luckily, I've always had really fantastic stories to work with, stories where my point of view dovetails with the narrative. Where a cover might blare adventure, an illustration is more like film music – there, but not *there*, remembered as part of the story. The example here, from one of Robert E Howard's Arabian adventure stories, is a perfect example of what Kaluta does – the story had plenty of knife fights, silken drapes and women draped in silk, all expertly described by the master of the genre, but there was a sentence I chose that I felt, if illustrated, would make Robert Howard nod in approval. The caption for this piece: "He made his way to a small side gate..."

5 Concept Art: Hannibal The Conqueror

Doing concept art is one of the pure thrills in my career. Akin to illustration, in that the art does tell a story, the story is told to the director, the production designer and, sometimes, the writer. Making a script scene into a world that makes the phone from Hollywood ring off the cradle is a joy unbound. Whether or not the film ever gets made, and if made, whether or not your art is translated into the film, the process of concept design goes forward – worlds are born, live and die, then spring anew from the ashes of previous dreams. Breathing life, importance and credibility into a building, a chariot, ship, sword or battle scene to the point where people say, "More!" Well, nothing tops it in this professional illustration racket.

The piece here is one of the 300+ pieces of art done (for my part) on a project to film the life and times of Hannibal Barca – the one with the elephants. I got to read Ross Leckie's book *Hannibal*, draw feverishly, then shoot the art to Hollywood via the world wide web – one of the treats of this kind of work. The art need not be finished for publication, as long as the creative types can get an idea of what you're thinking. That's a wrap!

THE BLUFFER'S GUIDE TO...

DAREDEVIL

Not the first blind superhero, or even the first one called 'Daredevil', but Matt Murdoch is the best... by **Matt Bielby**

For a character that changed modern comics, Daredevil had an unremarkable beginning – he seems to have been stitched together, Frankenstein-like, from whatever happened to be lying around. From DC's 'blind' Doctor Mid-Nite, Stan Lee nabbed the idea that a hero could still operate with a major disability; from another Golden Age hero came the groovy name.

But it didn't stop there. Lee raided his own coffers for DD's fighting style and cocky attitude, both half-inched from Spider-Man – as was his 'radar sense'. Daredevil's early villains were suspiciously Spidey too (for Doctor Octopus read Stiltman, for the Vulture see the Owl), while Iron Man was forced to cough up his supporting cast, with Karen Page playing the Pepper Potts role of the secretary who secretly loves our hero, and loser pal 'Happy' Hogan reincarnated in Foggy Nelson. Perhaps the only place early Daredevil *really* differed from other supers was in his relentlessly blue collar background. In the summer of '64 DC had no working class heroes and before DD neither did Marvel (except, perhaps, for Ben Grimm).

SELF-MADE MAN

As a boy living on the tough streets of the Hell's Kitchen neighbourhood in New York City, Matt Murdoch – bookish son of a struggling, mob-connected boxer – is blinded by radioactive waste while saving an old man from an out-of-control truck. Magic science compensates by giving him enhanced senses but the rest of Matt's superherodom is, like Bruce Wayne's, down to simple hard work. (Unlike Bruce, he has to work for his wealth too.)

Early *Daredevil* comics contain heaps of soap opera-style melodrama – artists John Romita and Gene Colan had a romance comic background, of course – but lack the engaging weirdness that a Ditko or Kirby brought to their books. Where it scored, however, was in its refreshing street-level sensibility, though later enemies would become more science fiction-based and DD would bounce through different incarnations (an inventive San Francisco era was memorable) before a horrible mid-'70s slump, the title nearer cancellation with every sorry issue.

And then something happened: Frank Miller. The list that follows is unapologetically Miller-centric, but only because these are the stories that *really* matter, the ones that define the character and changed comics. Good work has come since – recent runs by Brian Michael Bendis and Ed Brubaker deserve their fans – but when push comes to shove, nothing holds a candle to Miller.

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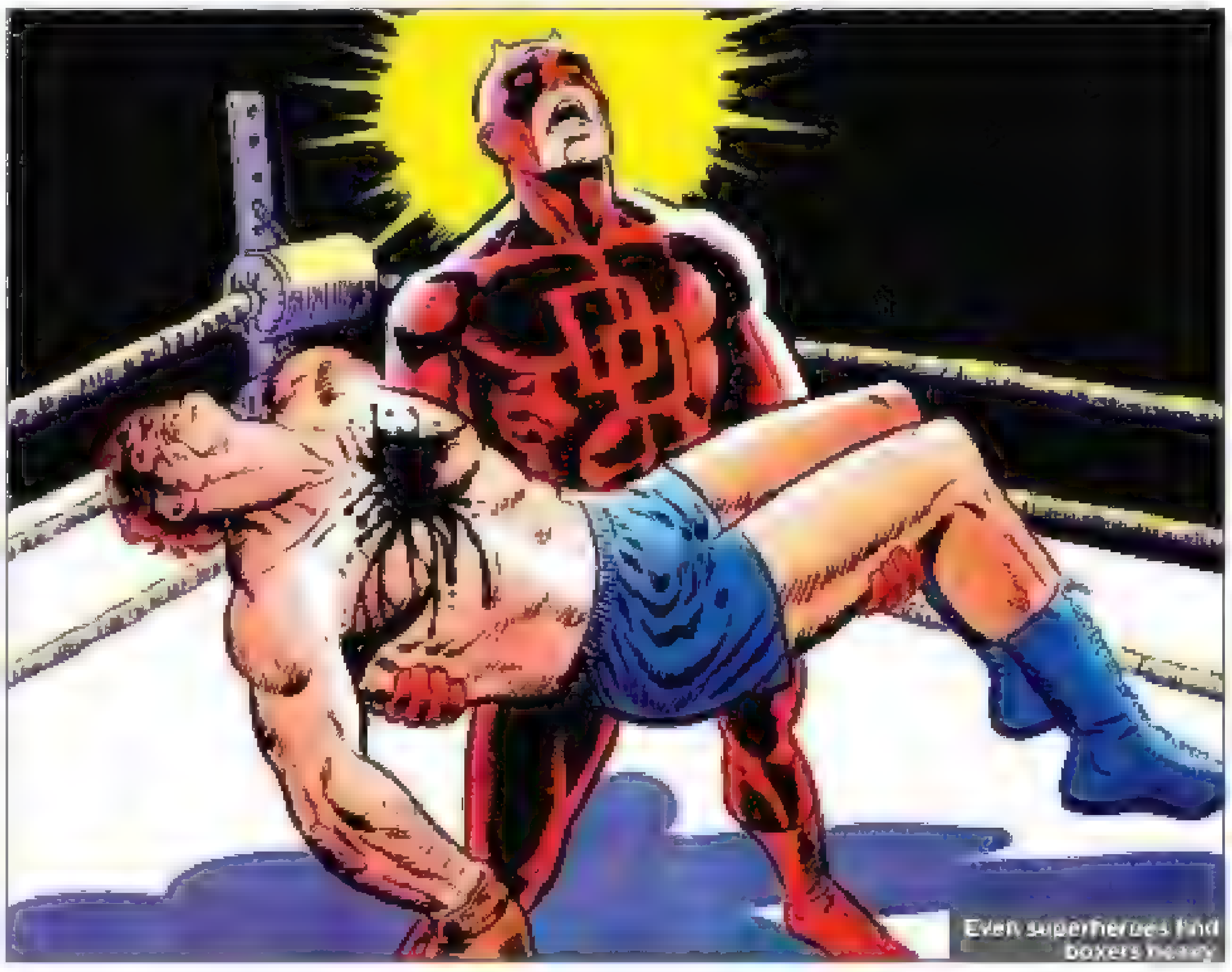


Even superheroes find boxers heavy

FACTFILE
DAREDEVIL

Created by: Stan Lee, Bill Everett (with input from Jack Kirby)

Real name: Matthew Michael 'Matt' Murdock

Base of operations: New York City (often, specifically, the working class Hell's Kitchen area)

Sidekicks/partners: The Black Widow, occasionally Elektra

Major enemies: The Kingpin, the Owl, the Gladiator, Bullseye, Typhoid Mary, the Hand

Superpowers: Enhanced senses (including 'radar sense'), extreme athleticism and dedication

Origin: Blinded by radioactive waste in pre-health and safety New York, Matt developed enhanced senses. Forbidden to fight by his boxer father, he makes sure 'someone else' takes on injustice in his place: Daredevil

Images © Marvel Comics

www.downmagaz.com

FOR A CHARACTER THAT **CHANGED MODERN COMICS**, DAREDEVIL HAD AN UNREMARKABLE BEGINNING

DAREDEVIL
BORN AGAIN

The One To Start With

Daredevil: Born Again

By Frank Miller & David Mazzucchelli

This one's the gold standard: if you ever needed to convince a nay-sayer that Daredevil's a major character, here's what you'd give them. In mid-1986 Miller returned as writer for a seven-issue run that inspired riveting work from the current incumbent artist, a promising newcomer called David Mazzucchelli. These are perhaps the ultimate Miller issues, the purest version of his paranoid nightmares about Big City corruption. The Kingpin comes close to destroying every aspect of Daredevil's life – his career, his sanity – when he learns his secret identity from the forgotten Karen Page, now a heroin-addicted porn starlet. But he's forgotten that "a man without hope is a man without fear".

Packed with controlled and well-crafted storytelling and reeking with Miller's interests – sex, death, urban decay – it just happens to contain, in #232-233, perhaps the best Captain America story of all time (and he's just a guest star!).

Frank Miller's Daredevil and Elektra. Romantic!

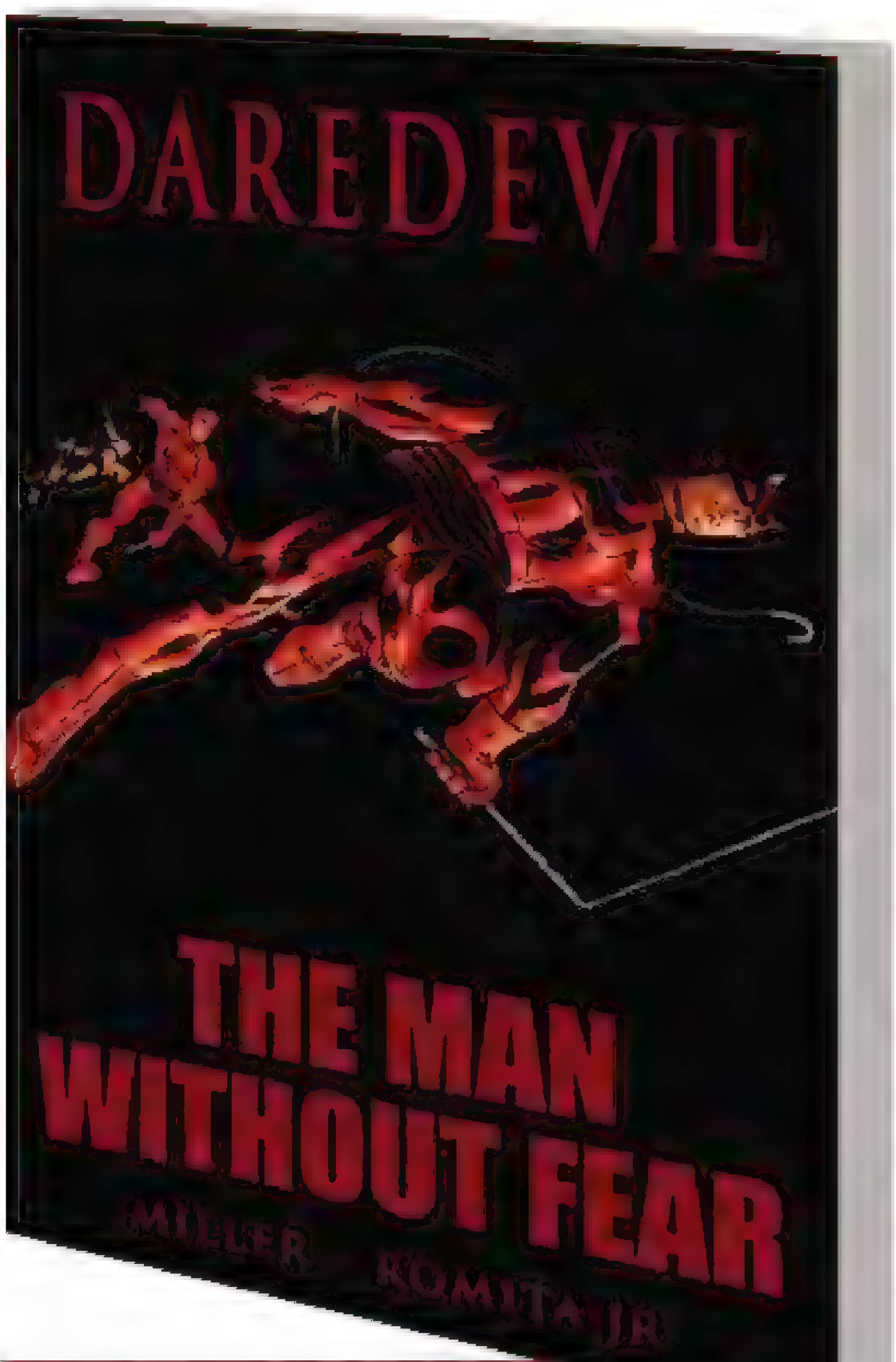
DAREDEVIL
THE DEVIL INSIDE AND OUT
ED BRUBAKER • MICHAEL LARK

The Modern Classic

Daredevil: The Devil, Inside and Out

By Ed Brubaker & Michael Lark

Despite the long shadow of Miller, some of the best ever Daredevil tales have appeared over the last decade, and you won't go far wrong with any of the Brian Michael Bendis/Alex Maleev issues – their grainy four-year run certainly put Matt through the wringer – or the Ed Brubaker/Michael Lark issues that followed. Our pick as a place to begin would probably be this one, putting Matt Murdock where we'd never seen him before, in Ryker's Island prison, surrounded by angry supervillains and letting the prison movie dynamic play out. Lark draws a lot like Mazzucchelli and Brubaker has crime story chops galore.



The Essential Origin Tale

Daredevil: The Man Without Fear

By Frank Miller & John Romita Jr

In this excellent five-issue mini-series Frank Miller revisited Daredevil's origins. As with *Born Again* he writes only, dragging career-best art from another of Marvel's talented rising stars, John Romita Jr. We get Daredevil as a kid in Hell's Kitchen and later as a college boy, with the Kingpin, Elektra and Stick all influencing his development in deeper ways than we knew. The timeless atmosphere has something of *The Godfather* to it at times, and nothing resembling a superhero suit appears until the very last page. It's brilliant, of course. If only the *Daredevil* movie had been like this.

Proof that blindness isn't an issue.

www.downmagaz.com

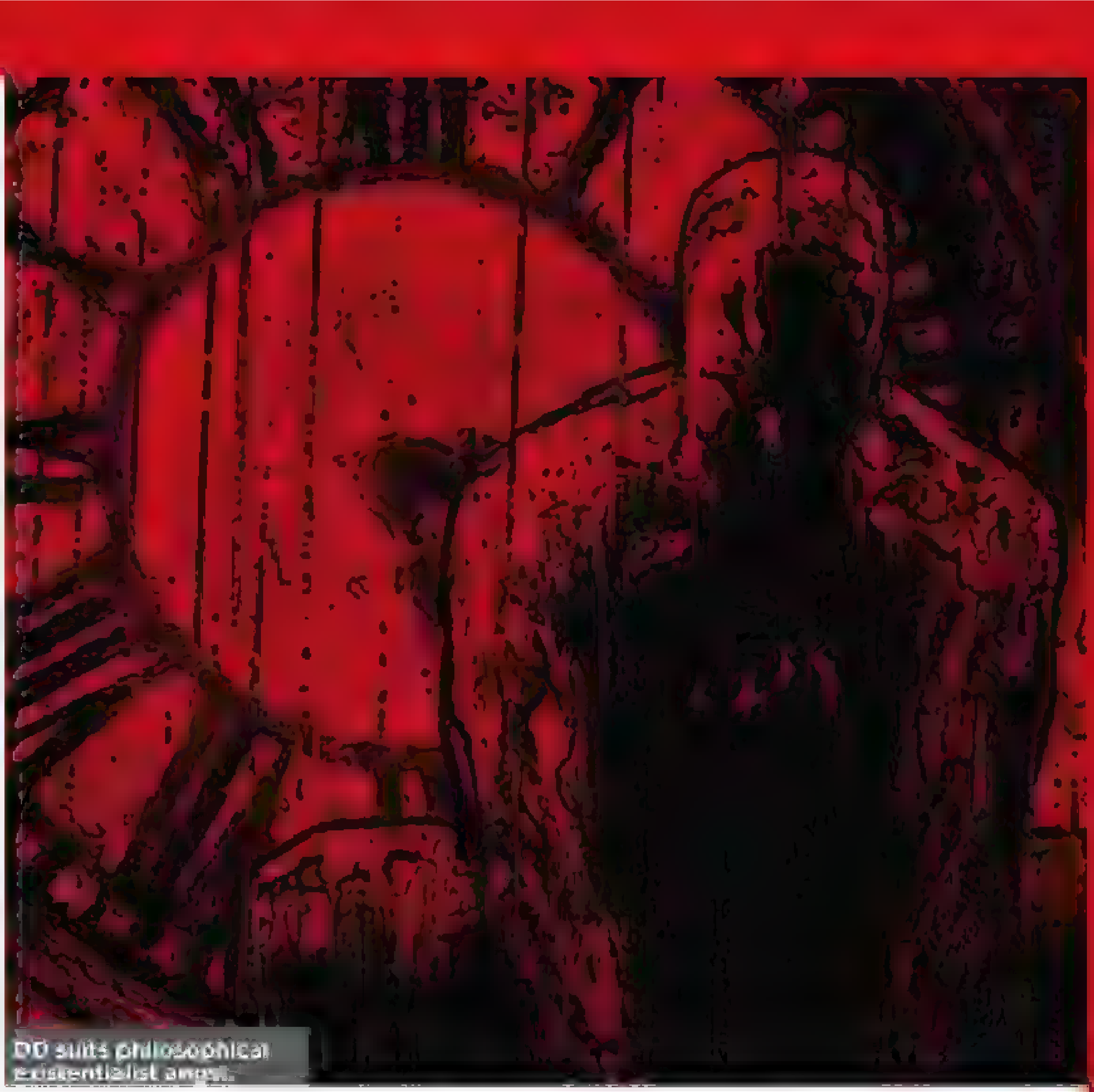
MARVEL LEGENDS
DAREDEVIL
DAREDEVIL: YELLOW
LOEB • SALE

The *Other* Essential Origin Tale

Daredevil: Yellow

By Jeph Loeb & Tim Sale

The Man Without Fear is almost an impossible act to follow origin-wise, so you'd be forgiven for thinking that no-one would ever try. But Loeb and Sale are always a class act together and this example of their 'Colors' series – the likes of *Spider-Man: Blue* and *Captain America: White* would follow, each containing a new perspective on their respective hero's early years – makes a fine stab at it. Moving at a leisurely pace, packed with glorious full-page panels and swimming in a gentle, melancholy nostalgia, it revels in a *Mad Men*-like period glow and cares as much about Matt and Karen's romance as it does the assorted villain fights. It's definitely a palate-cleansing change of mood and, as a result, is a distinctive take on Hornhead's formative years.


DD suits philosophical existentialist angst.

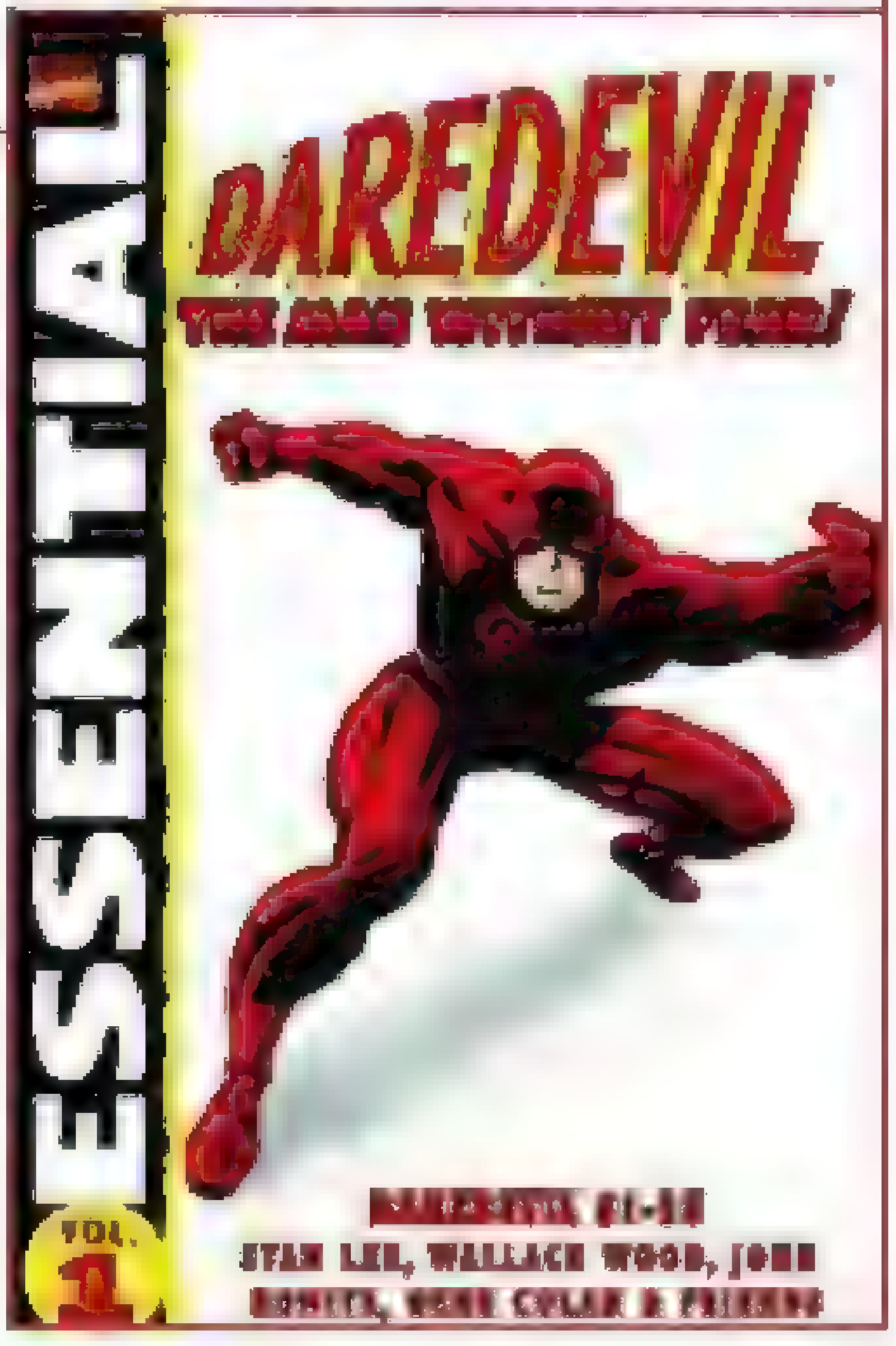
The Rock It's Built On

Essential Daredevil Vol.1

By Stan Lee, Wallace Wood, John Romita, Gene Colan

There's always something worth having in these low-cost volumes, but this one is a special treat as it doesn't just contain the earliest issues, with art by veterans Bill Everett and Joe Orlando, but examples of all three artists who really built the character too.

First up, the polished and elegant Wally Wood, who ditched the complex, wrestler-influenced red-and-yellow costume for a sleek all-red model and offers at least one genuinely classic issue (#7, where DD fights the vastly superior Sub-Mariner). When Wood gives us a cutaway of DD's billy club, showing how all the bits work inside, it's no crazed Jack Kirby flight of fantasy but something a clever amateur engineer could conceivably build in his lock-up. Next came John Romita for a short run – cheery, charming and muscular, as ever – followed by Gene Colan, the defining *Daredevil* artist of the first hundred issues, great at fluid movement, weird camera angles and moody shadows, not to mention the hottest comic book ladies. And the best thing: if you like Colan's work (and you will), Volumes 2, 3 and 4 are packed with it too.



He's done a Simon Cowell with those pearly whites.

Good Guys Wear Red!

Daredevil Vols.1-3

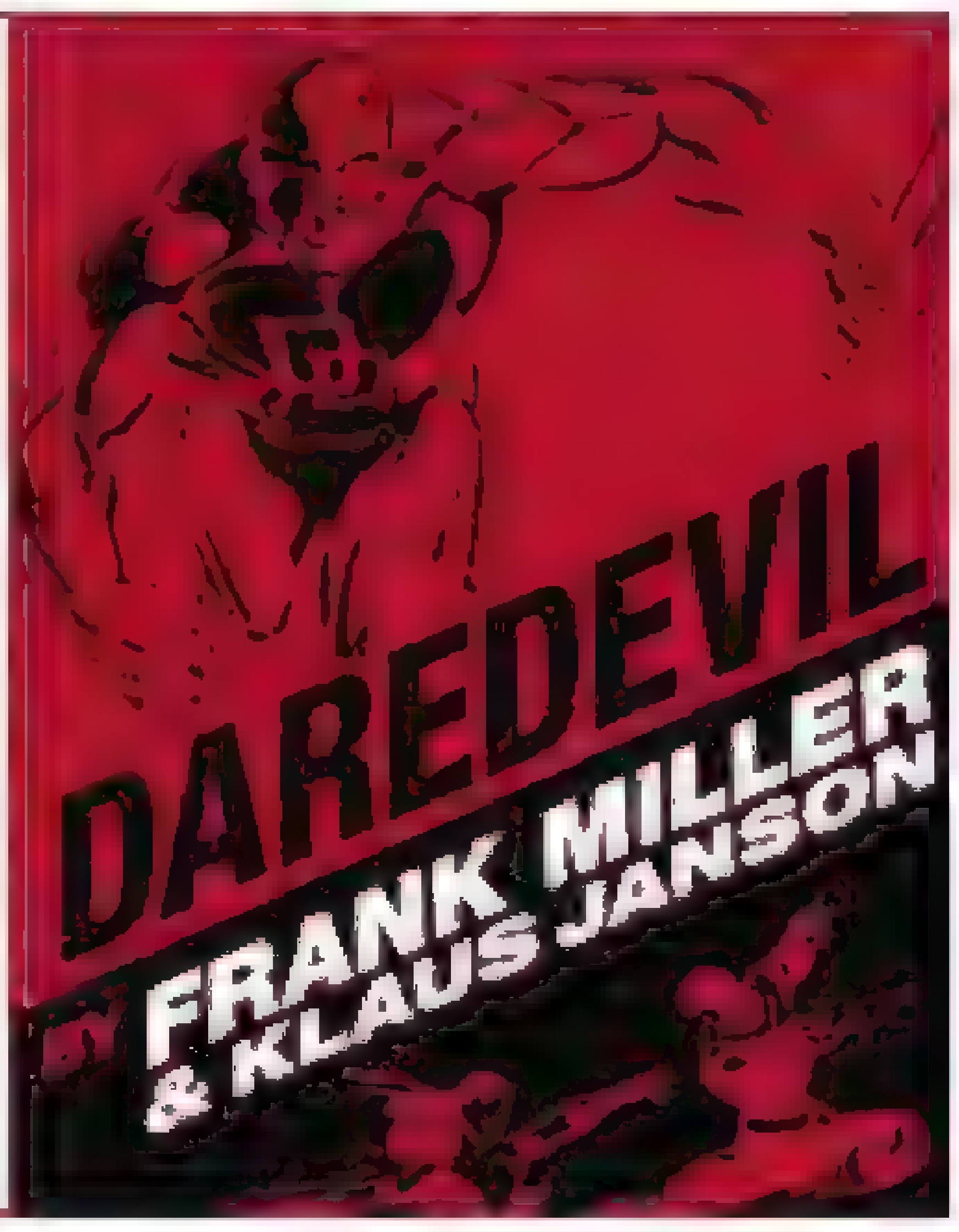
By Frank Miller, Klaus Janson and others

Available in three volumes, the entire original Miller run remains remarkable from start to finish. The first is mostly written by Roger McKenzie, with Miller still learning his trade on art. Of course, once Miller takes over the writing as well, as he does for the last five issues here, things shift to a higher gear. Elektra – the classic ex-girlfriend turned bad – shows up, fight choreography becomes *way* more ambitious and we're on our way.

Vol.2 takes us through to #184, with order of evil ninjas the Hand, mentor Stick – Miller retrofitting DD's origin gleefully – and an incredible centre-piece in the double-size #181: "Bullseye vs. Elektra. One Wins. One Dies." Finally Vol.3 wraps it all up, climaxing in another double-sizer, the highly satisfying #190, before Miller caps *even that* with a coda in #191. Among the bonuses we get the graphic novel *Daredevil: Love And War*, a stylistic companion-piece to Miller's collaboration with Bill Sienkiewicz, *Elektra: Assassin*.

Why does this stuff matter? Well, it didn't just save *Daredevil*, it reinvented mainstream American comics – thank it for the whole 'grim and gritty' thing that dominated the '80s, not to mention the death of the thought balloon.

Miller took the book back to its crime story roots, possessing as he did a greater interest in the violent romance of pulp novels and film noir than in superheroes. Images became a lot more simple – blocky and almost abstract, they made the reader do more of the work – and action sequences cinematic, these days realised as bone-shattering ballets across the rooftops. CH

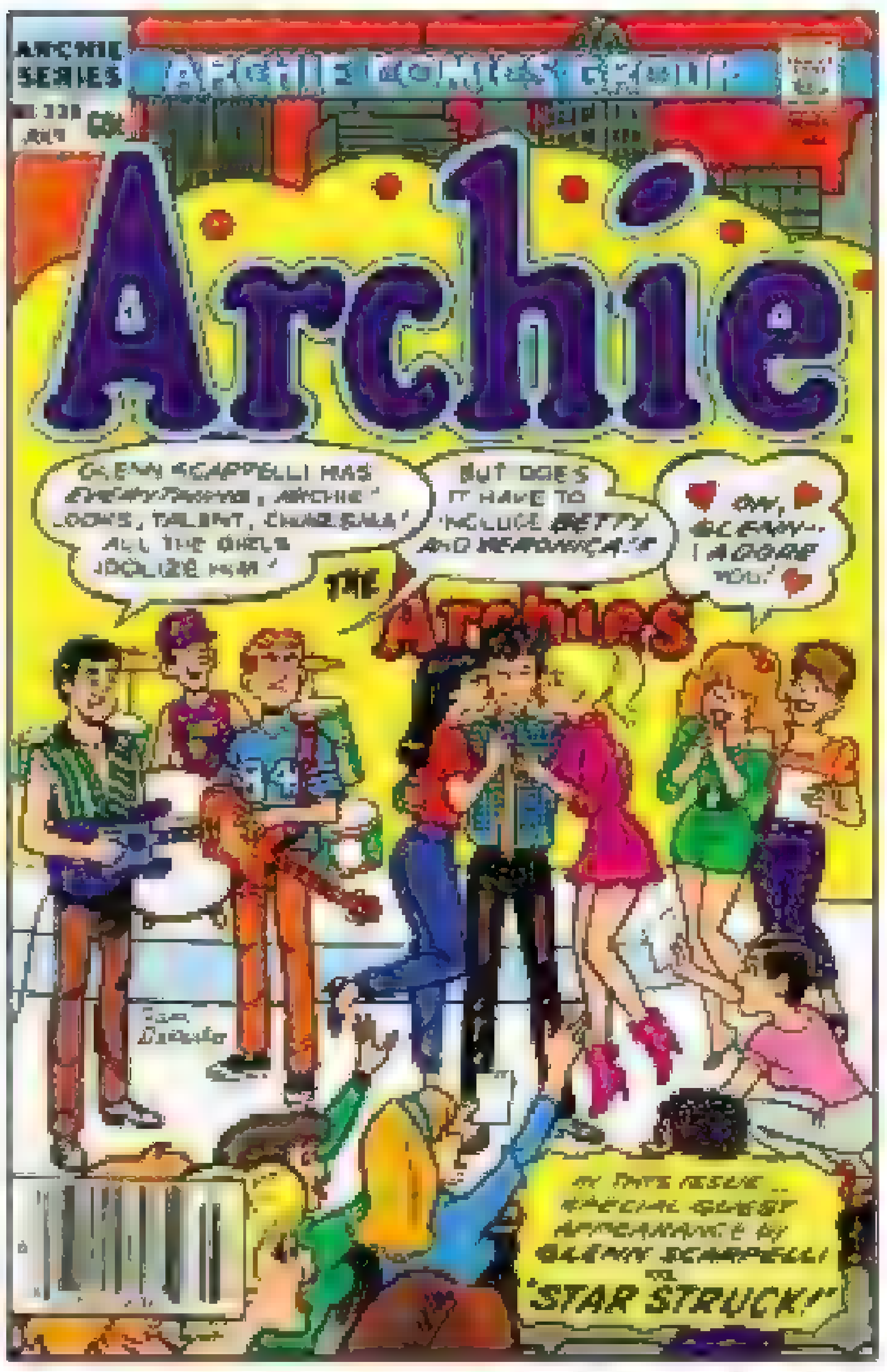


AN AMERICAN BOY

Michael Molcher celebrates the small-town allure of eternal teenager Archie, on the eve of his 70th birthday...

For someone who's been around for almost seven decades, Archibald Andrews is doing remarkably well. The red-topped eternal teenager has been a mainstay of 'mom and pop' Americana since he first got in a tizzy over a girl in *Pep Comics #22* in 1941, thanks to the character's blend of high school hi-jinx, innocuous romance and slapstick comedy.

Created by artist Bob Montana, everything about Archie and his home of Riverdale was safe – from the small town stereotypes to his unending dithering over whether to date fun blonde Bettie or ambitious brunette Veronica. But as he fast approaches his 70th birthday, this safe soda pop world is being turned upside down... and it's meant that business has never been better.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Archie
GLENN SCARPELLI HAS EVERYTHING, ARCHIE! LOOKS, TALENT, CHARISMA! ALL THE GIRLS IDOLIZE HIM!
BUT DOES IT HAVE TO INCLUDE BETTY AND VERONICA?!
OH, GLENN-- I ADORE YOU!
THE Archies
IN THIS ISSUE... SPECIAL GUEST APPEARANCE by GLENN SCARPELLI in "STAR STRUCK!"

All images © Archie Comics

CHANGING WITH THE TIMES

Make no mistake – while the superhumans of DC and Marvel get all the attention, Archie is one of the world's biggest comic book stars, with massive numbers of readers across the globe. Sales may have slumped since his '40s heyday, when *Archie* titles sold well over a million copies an issue, but a succession of high profile storylines – including the first openly gay character, Archie finally getting married and Riverdale High teacher Miss Grundy dying of cancer – reportedly resulted in $40 million in sales in 2009, with more than 1.7million downloads of titles through the Archie Comics app by the end of last December. All of a sudden, a comic book character that seemed outdated and merely trading on nostalgia is on the rise again.

Artist and writer Dan Parent walked straight into Archie Comics after graduating from Joe Kubert's School of Cartoon and Graphic Art. Twenty-four years later and, while he's produced some of the most talked about storylines for decades, he says the secret is to not stray too far from Montana's original.

"I grew up on the Archie character and was always a fan," he says. "I think that's what keeps the characters going – they have to stick true to how they were created. Archie's still the goofy guy-next-door, Betty and Veronica still have the same traits – they're like opposites but they're still best friends – and that's very, very important in keeping *Archie* comics going. It's also important to keep storylines current, so we do have to update the storylines to the times and add more modern characters to the mix, but the core *Archie* characters have to stay pretty much the same.

"I can be a little loose with [the style] sometimes, but I really want to put my stamp on the design of the overall thing. I try and do covers that have a bit of a more dynamic look to them, you try and design pages that jump out at you »

ARCHIE TRIVIA

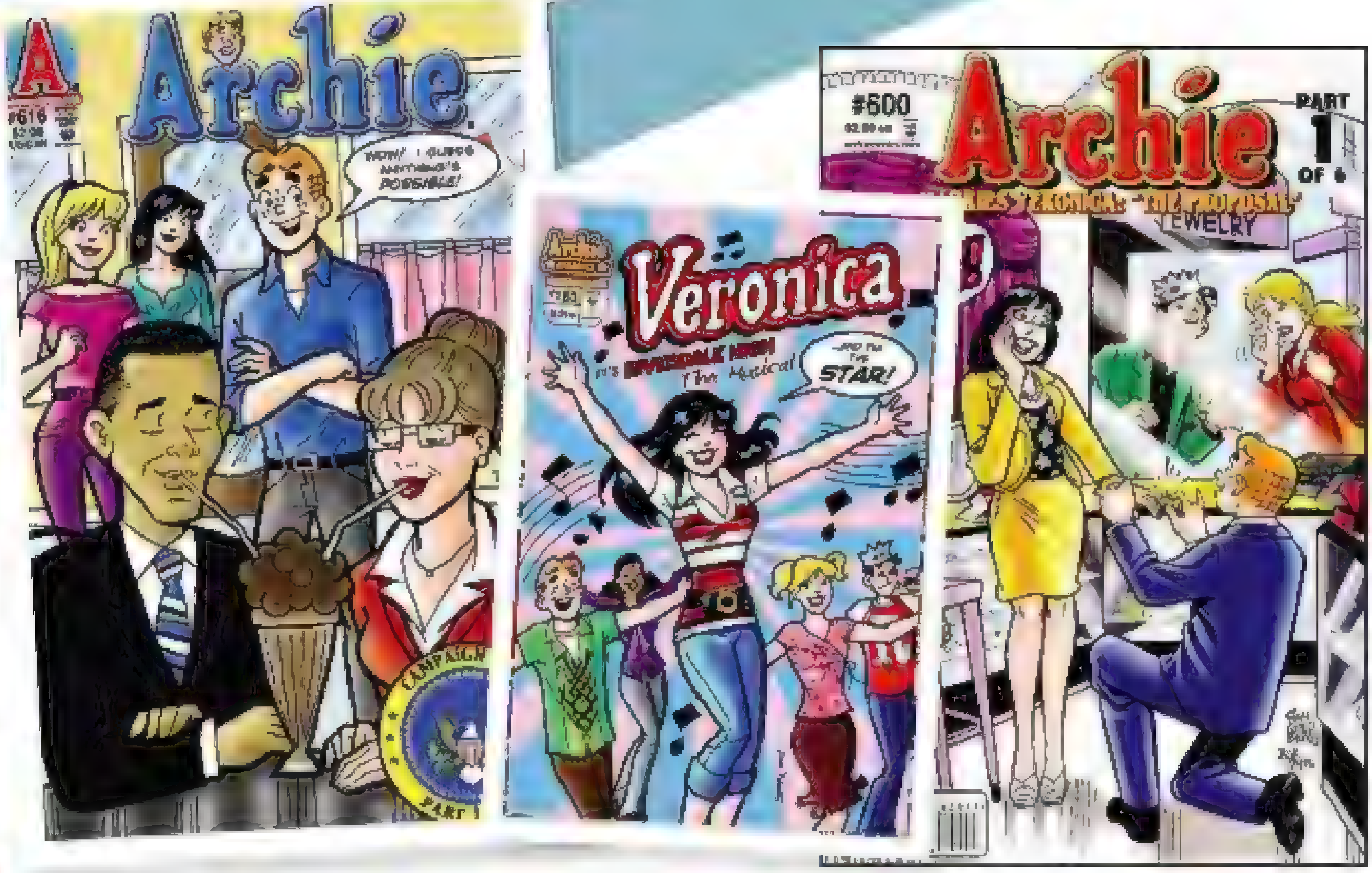
Sex may never have tainted the pages of *Archie* comics, but in possibly the oddest licensing deal ever during the '70s, Archie became an out-and-out Christian. The brainchild of born-again artist Al Hartley and sold only through Christian bookshops, Spire Comics' titles saw Archie and his pals wrestling with the temptations of the flesh and openly preaching to their classmates.

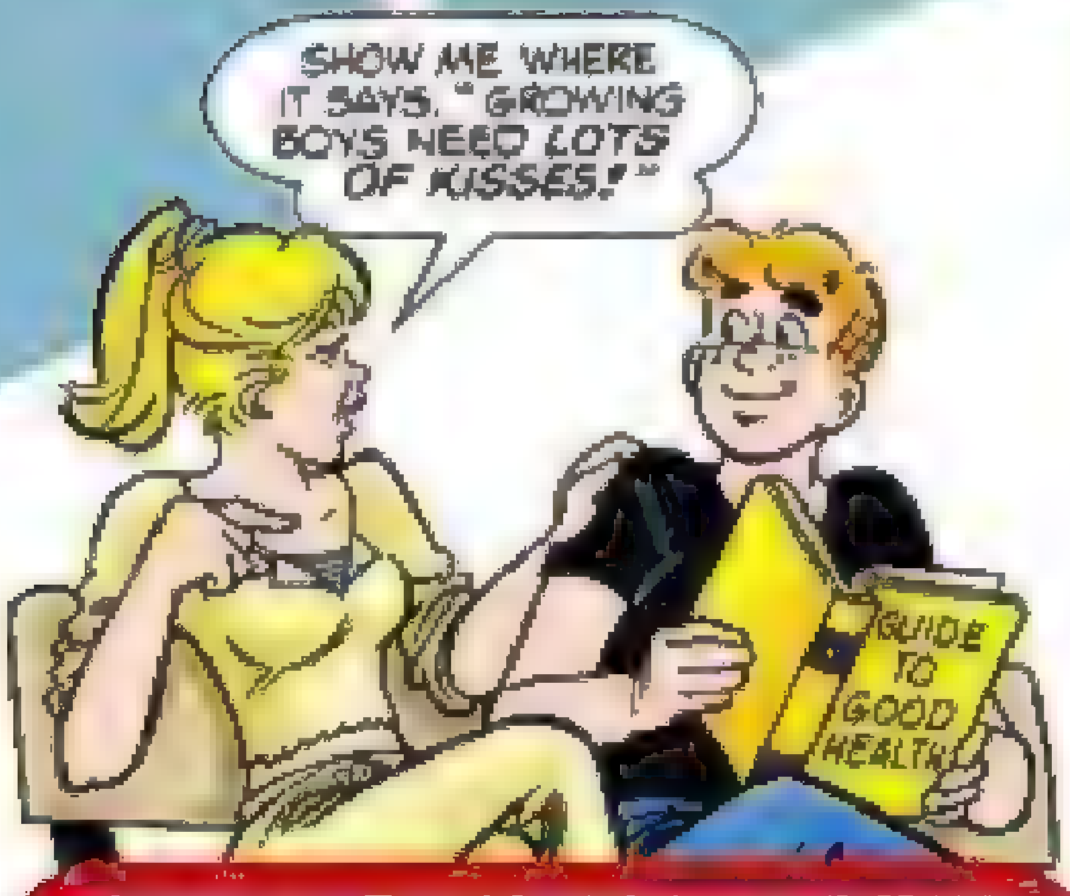
OPPOSITE: The real world leaks into Riverdale... sort of.

RIGHT: Good old Jughead tucks into a doughnut or three.

PIPS DONUTS

EVERYBODY GETS ALONG IN RIVERDALE!
Dan Parent
CAMPAIGN PAIN
PART 2 OF 2

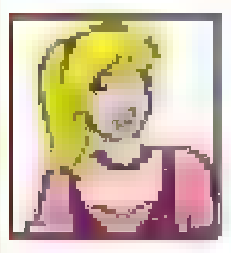

Archie
#616
WOW! I GUESS ANYTHING'S POSSIBLE!
CAMPAIGN
PART
Archie
Veronica
#183
IT'S RIVERDALE HIGH The Musical
...AND I'M THE STAR!
#600
Archie
PART 1 OF 6
ARCHIE MARRIES VERONICA: "THE PROPOSAL"
JEWELRY


SHOW ME WHERE IT SAYS, "GROWING BOYS NEED LOTS OF KISSES!"
GUIDE TO GOOD HEALTH

WHO'S WHO IN RIVERDALE?

Over the years, Riverdale has become its own universe of different characters – here's just some of Archie's gang:

Archie Andrews The archetypal all-American 17-year-old. With his red hair, loveable but clumsy manner and over-complicated love life, Mrs Andrews's little boy is most famous for his 70-year inability to choose between Betty and Veronica


Betty Cooper The blonde corner in Archie's unending love triangle. Betty is the true American girl next door

Veronica Lodge Rich and spoilt, brunette Veronica is Betty's best friend and also her rival for Archie's affections

Jughead Jones Archie's best friend, well known for his trademark grey crown hat. Obsessed with eating and usually indifferent towards girls. Owns a sheepdog called Hot Dog.

Reggie Mantle All-round 'jock' type and prankster. He's Archie's main love rival

Pop Tate The owner of the Chocklit Shoppe, where Archie and the gang hang out

Hiram Lodge Veronica's father and the richest man in Riverdale. He disapproves of Archie dating Veronica.

Mr Weatherbee Fat and bald former United States Marine and now principal of Riverdale High.

Miss Grundy An old teacher at Riverdale High. A recent controversial 'what if?' storyline saw her die of cancer.

"IN THE END, HE SURPRISED EVERYONE BY PLUMPING INSTEAD FOR RED-HEAD CHERYL BLOSSOM, A CHARACTER ORIGINALLY DROPPED FOR BEING A TAD TOO SEXUAL"

a little bit. That's how you try and take the *Archie* style and jazz it up. Readers would know if we were to change the characters too much because we have a pretty strong fan base and they're the first ones to tell us if they think we've done something to betray the characters."

LOVE AND MARRIAGE

Yet this eternal world of youthful innocence is not without its controversy. The *Love Showdown* series in 1994, which Parent wrote, promised a resolution to the decades-long struggle between Betty and Veronica for Archie's heart. In the end, he surprised everyone by plumping instead for red-head Cheryl Blossom, a character originally dropped for being a tad too sexual. The status quo may have soon returned, but it was an instant bestseller and reinvigorated interest in the titles. It also suggested that even in this 'safe' world, there were fresh stories and, if *Love Showdown* was something of an earthquake in Riverdale, the news that Archie was due to marry not once, but twice, grabbed headlines around the world.

Archie Comics had always produced creative variants, even parodies, of its own characters – over the years Archie has been everything from a spy (*The Man From RIVERDALE*) to a rock star (*The Archies*) to a superhero (*Pureheart the Powerful*) – but in 2009 the magazine-size title *Life With Archie* ran parallel stories about a married Archie, one chronicling his future life with Betty, the other with Veronica. The result, with its very grown up themes of happiness versus worldly chattels, was an injection of soap opera that was immediately and immensely popular.

"The thing is that the different universes seem to co-exist pretty well together," says Parent. "There's the main books that [people will] pick up at the store and they know those are the regular teenage adventures of Archie, but people kind of like the 'what if?' universes of him marrying Betty or Veronica. Those stories have a little bit more of a soap opera feel... a little more meat to them, which is why we can do things that we wouldn't be able to do in the main *Archie* books."

The innovation continued, when Parent introduced a new character called Kevin Keller, who is blond, blue-eyed and openly gay. His debut, *Veronica #202*, was the first *Archie* title to completely sell out.

"It was definitely a big step forward for *Archie*," Parent admits. "The key to introducing a gay character was that we knew it would be a newsworthy event but we didn't want it to come off as a gimmick, we wanted to create a character that was going to stick around for a while. And even though the character is gay, we didn't want him to be defined by being gay at the same time. It's a tricky path to walk along – you want to create great characters, but you want to make sure he fits in well with the *Archie* universe too."

The title's first interracial relationship – Archie dating Valerie, the African-American member of Josie and the Pussycats – and Miss Grundy's recent death from cancer kept up the pressure,

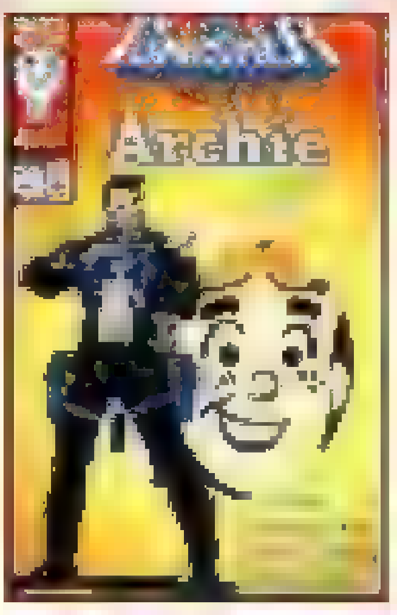
RIVERDALE'S GOT TALENT!!
R

ABOVE: Will he? Won't he? Make up your mind, Archie! (He did.)

RIGHT: We wouldn't complain, going by Betty and Veronica there. Cough.

ARCHIE TRIVIA

For years, Archie's old 'jalopy' was depicted as a 1916 Ford Model T jalopy called Betsy but this was finally destroyed in 1983 and replaced with a Ford Mustang. It still breaks down a lot though.



ARCHIE TRIVIA

In 1994's *Meets The Punisher Archie*, Archie unwittingly became the quarry of Marvel's Punisher, after the murderous vigilante went undercover as a PE teacher at Riverdale High and mistook the ginger-topped teen for a notorious drug dealer named 'Red'.

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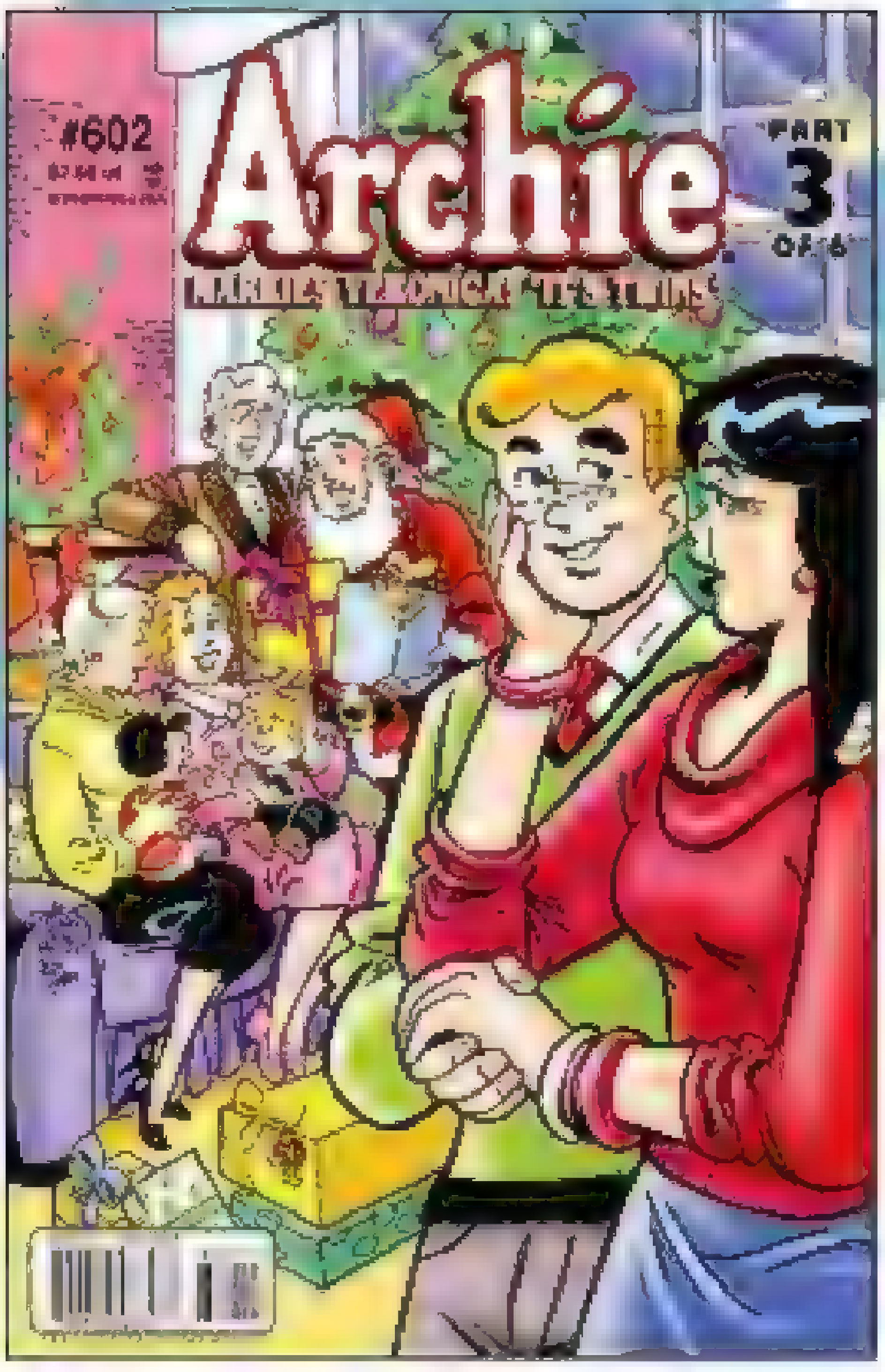
Archie
WHY WON'T THIS *HOLIDAY* EVER *END*?
FIND OUT IN...
"The Elfth Day of Christmas!"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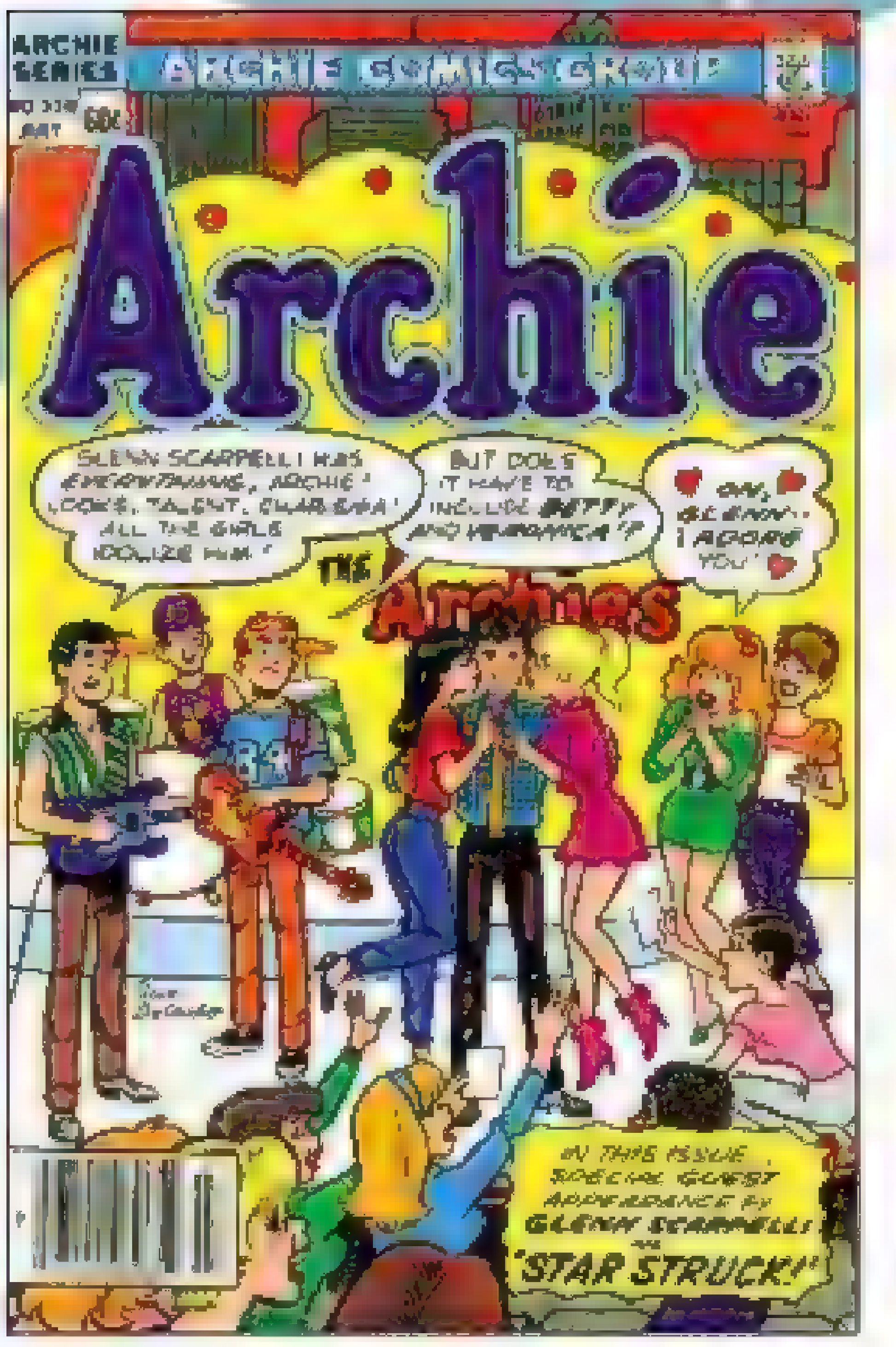
Archie
PART 3 OF 6
ARCHIE MARRIES VERONICA "IT'S TWINS!"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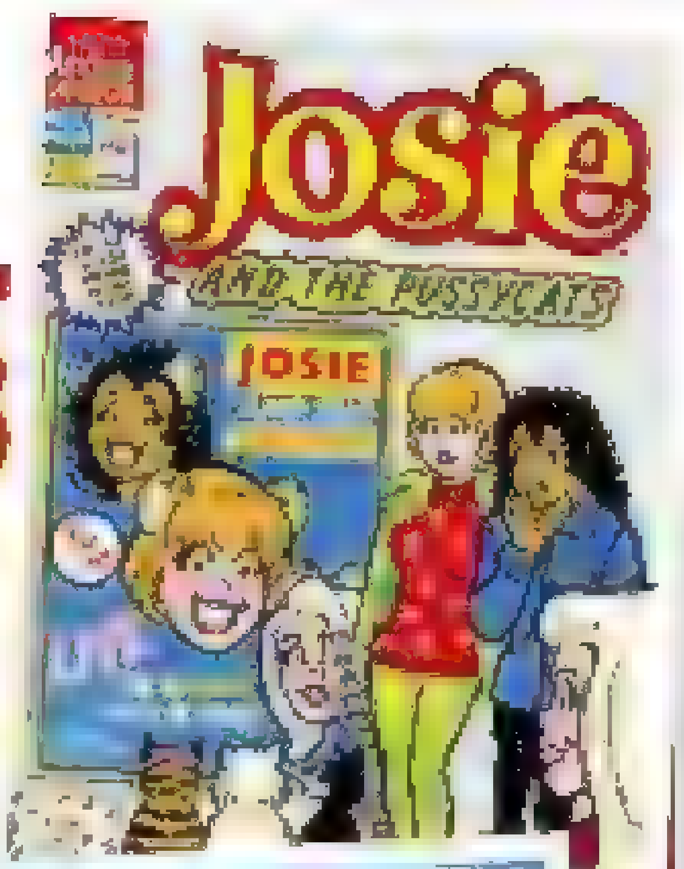
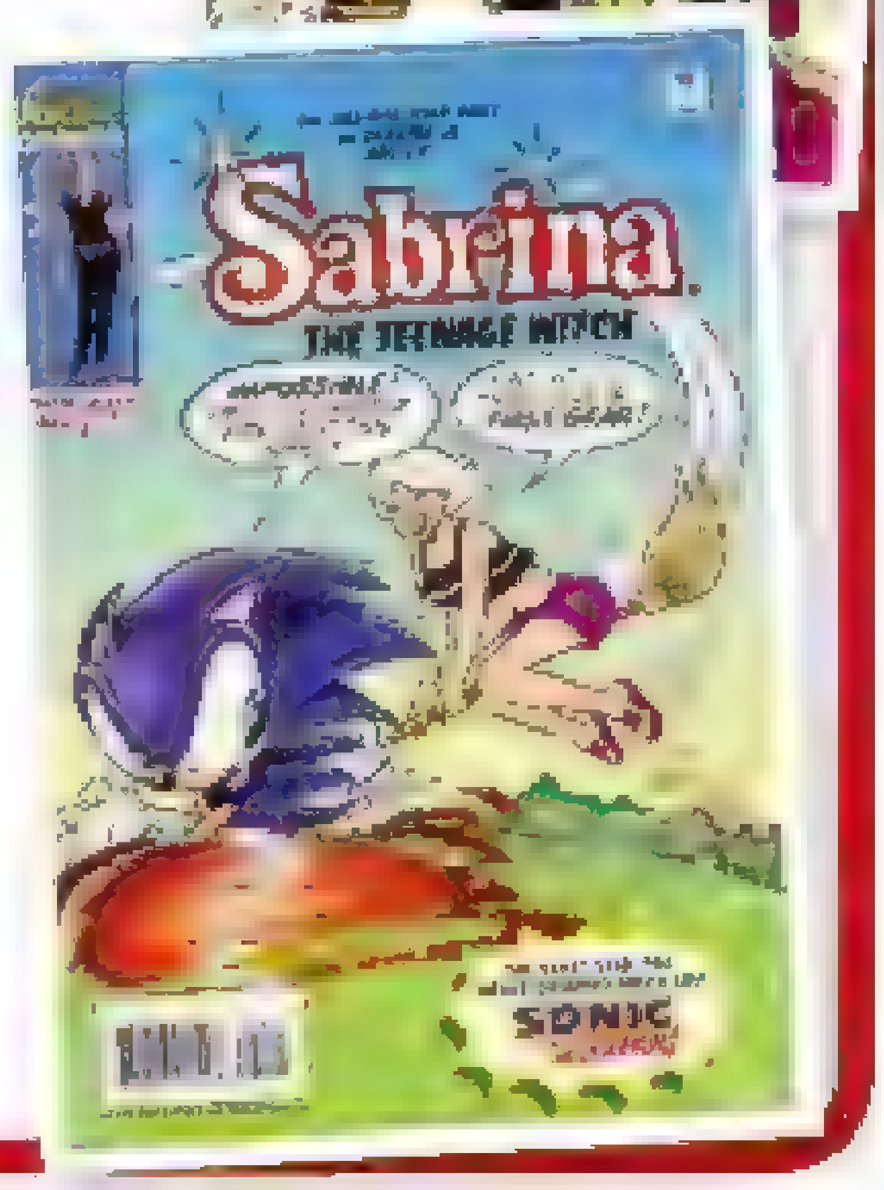
SPIN OFFS

Josie and the Pussycats
Another Dan DeCarlo creation, this time about an all-girl rock band. The original series about Josie, Melody and Valerie ran for almost 20 years and was adapted into a Saturday morning cartoon in 1970 and a live-action film in 2001.



Sabrina the Teenage Witch
Created by writer George Gladir and artist Dan DeCarlo, this young witch (think *Bewitched* rather than wiccan) from nearby Greendale who lived with her two aunts (also witches) debuted in 1962, eventually appearing in her own popular TV sitcom in 1996



while a cover last year showing President Obama and Tea Party darling Sarah Palin sharing a milkshake garnered coverage from gossip and news websites that previously would never have thought about focusing on the character.

BEING MAINSTREAM

The original publisher, MLJ Comics (derived from the first initials of partners Maurice Coyne, Louis Silberkleit and John L Goldwater), became Archie Comics in 1946 to reflect the success of its main product and, inexplicably in a world where comic companies change hands for billions, it's still a family-owned and run business – Silberkleit's daughter-in-law and Goldwater's son are now co-chief executives. Although the firm maintains a cosy, familiar relationship with its readers, its ambitions are becoming more evident even beyond the enviable column inches of the last two years – pirates, copyright infringers and even fan-fiction writers quickly receive cease-and-desist warnings, while licensing deals and aggressive forays into digital downloads and new foreign markets show that Archie Comics is very much aware of the potential of this long-established global brand.

Part of *Archie*'s continuing success as a comic book is the difference in its distribution model from mainstream comics – you're more likely to see the thicker 'digest' titles on newsstands or in supermarkets than in a comic shop.

"It's a different model," says Parent. "It is a different market because people who buy *Archie* comics don't necessarily go into comic book shops. I guess that makes us a sort of mainstream purchase. We do sell in comic shops and have success there, but our distribution model is definitely different."

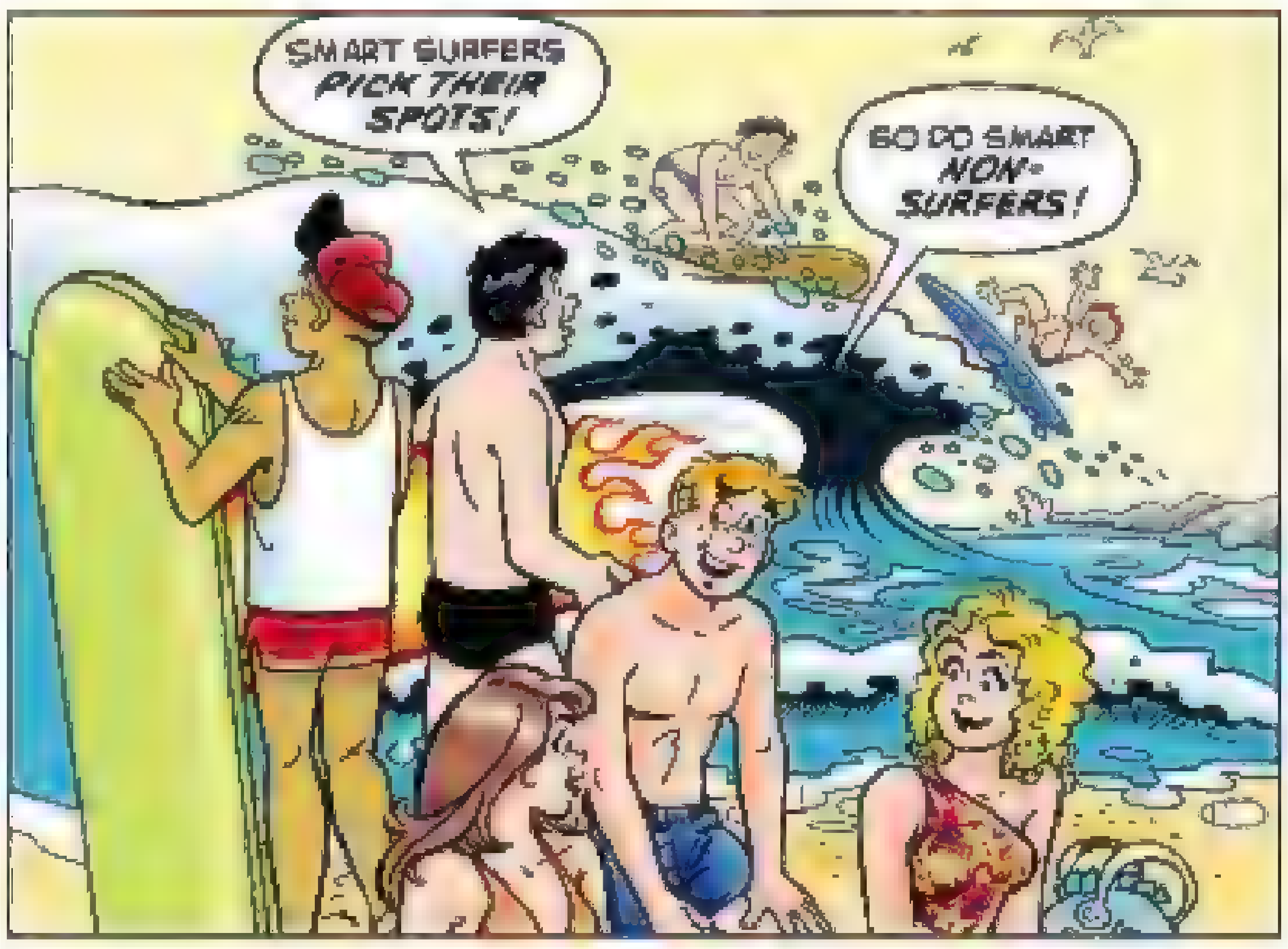
This smorgasbord of titles, characters and plotlines is a something-for-everyone industry – you want the Archie of your youth? Soap opera storylines? Whatever it is – there's an *Archie* title for you.

"*Archie* is like comfort food for some people, y'know," says Parent. "We sell a lot of our books in supermarkets, so people will be shopping and see our books at the checkout. They're friendly little reminders of people's pasts."

This has proved something of a problem in the past, titles tainted with nostalgia turning off younger audiences only too willing to dismiss them as "old-fashioned". Yet the demographic spread of Archie's audience, both in terms of age but also nationality, suggests the red-headed teen still has plenty of fans.

"I would say that they're really 'for all readers' comics," says Parent. "You pick them up as a kid but at comic book shows there's a very large adult fan base. Lots of people collect them for their children, or at least use them as an excuse to read them. I think it has a lot to do with people starting to read *Archie* comics when they're very young, whereas people tend to read Marvel, DC and the superhero comics when they're older. So when you're reading the book when you might be five or six years old the characters are more ingrained in you, so I think people maybe have a stronger connection that way.

> "ARCHIE IS LIKE COMFORT FOOD FOR SOME PEOPLE. THEY SEE OUR BOOKS AT THE CHECKOUT, AND THEY'RE FRIENDLY LITTLE REMINDERS OF PEOPLE'S PASTS"


SMART SURFERS PICK THEIR SPOTS!
SO DO SMART NON-SURFERS!

ABOVE LEFT: Marriage? Pregnancy? Even Riverdale sees the passage of life.

RIGHT: Is there anyone Archie *hasn't* been romantically involved with? Honestly.

"I know that it was one of the first comics I ever read, so I think that's one of the reasons people are so attached to the characters."

OLD MAN ARCHIE

In a recent *New York Times* article, the people behind Archie Comics said bringing *Archie* into the "modern age" was a key goal. Media deals are being done, chances are being taken: a teenager from the '40s can still speak to teenagers now.

Archie titles continue to sell millions of copies every year, with headline-grabbing 'what if?' stories sitting comfortably alongside the core, eternally unchanging product, yet is the 'mainstream' of comics paying attention to this supermarket aisle favourite?

With his 70th birthday later this year, there still seems to be life in Archie yet – will the comics industry ever truly acknowledge the success of its red-headed son who is still daring to do things differently?

"What people think we are, isn't necessarily *what* we are," chuckles Parent. "Pick up a *Life With Archie* book and you might find that interesting – you might be pleasantly surprised. I think there's a little more to it than people think." CH

ARCHIE TRIVIA

A 1990 live action TV movie, *Archie: To Riverdale and Back Again*, showed the characters 15 years after their high school graduation with *Desperate Housewives's* Christopher Rich playing an adult Archie. Panned by fans and critics alike, the hoped-for series failed to materialise.

Archie

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NOW PLAYING
THE Archies
AND
Josie AND THE PUSSYCATS
GALVAN
Koslowski

MYSTERY MAN

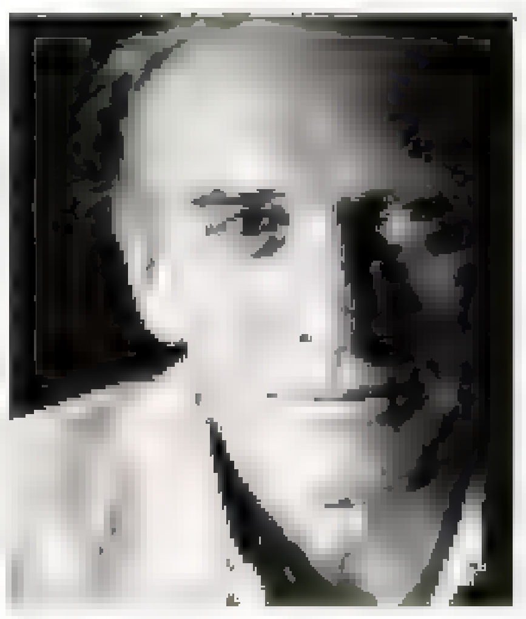
An enormous success in France, acclaimed thriller series *XIII* is currently hitting the stands over here courtesy of publisher Cinebook. Paul Gravett takes a closer look...

This year, two Belgian comics are heading for major Hollywood adaptations. The boy reporter, Tintin, and those blue gnomes, The Smurfs, are both coming to computer-animated life in a cinema near you. But there's a lot more to comics in Belgium than these long-established favourites by Hergé and Peyo. One phenomenon now poised for greater international crossover success is Jean Van Hamme.

For more than four decades, Van Hamme has been the writing mastermind behind several of the most popular bande dessinée or French-language comics, from Viking fantasy in *Thorgal* to high-finance action in *Largo Winch* and even stirring new investigations by those thoroughly British retro detectives Blake and Mortimer. In that time, his series have sold a staggering 33 million copies worldwide in 25 languages. Van Hamme has become a millionaire by totally transforming the Belgian comics industry. He has proved that graphic novels can become mainstream, mass-market best-sellers by combining page-turning genre storylines with dynamic, accessible graphics of the highest calibre. And nowhere is his genius at gripping narratives, compelling characterisation and complex, unpredictable plotting better demonstrated than in his 19-volume conspiracy thriller entitled simply *XIII*.

The enigmatic title *XIII* is the Roman numeral for 13, unlucky for some. Inexplicably, this number is tattooed on the neck of a mystery man, washed up on the American coast with a bullet through his head. At death's door, he's rescued by the elderly fisherman who finds him, operated on by the local lady ex-doctor barred for her alcoholism, and nursed by the elderly couple back to health. But his mental health is another matter. The bullet wound has erased that vital area in his brain which houses his personal history.

What was he, he muses? "A cop? A gangster? A secret agent? A mercenary? Or a simple tourist robbed by thugs?" An amnesiac staring back at a stranger's face in the mirror, he has no papers, nothing on him, only two clues as to who he might really be: a Yale key sewn into his shirt collar and that strange branding. When his life is once again threatened, his only goal becomes an increasingly desperate quest to rediscover his memory and his identity.



ABOVE: Jean Van Hamme, the man behind the words.

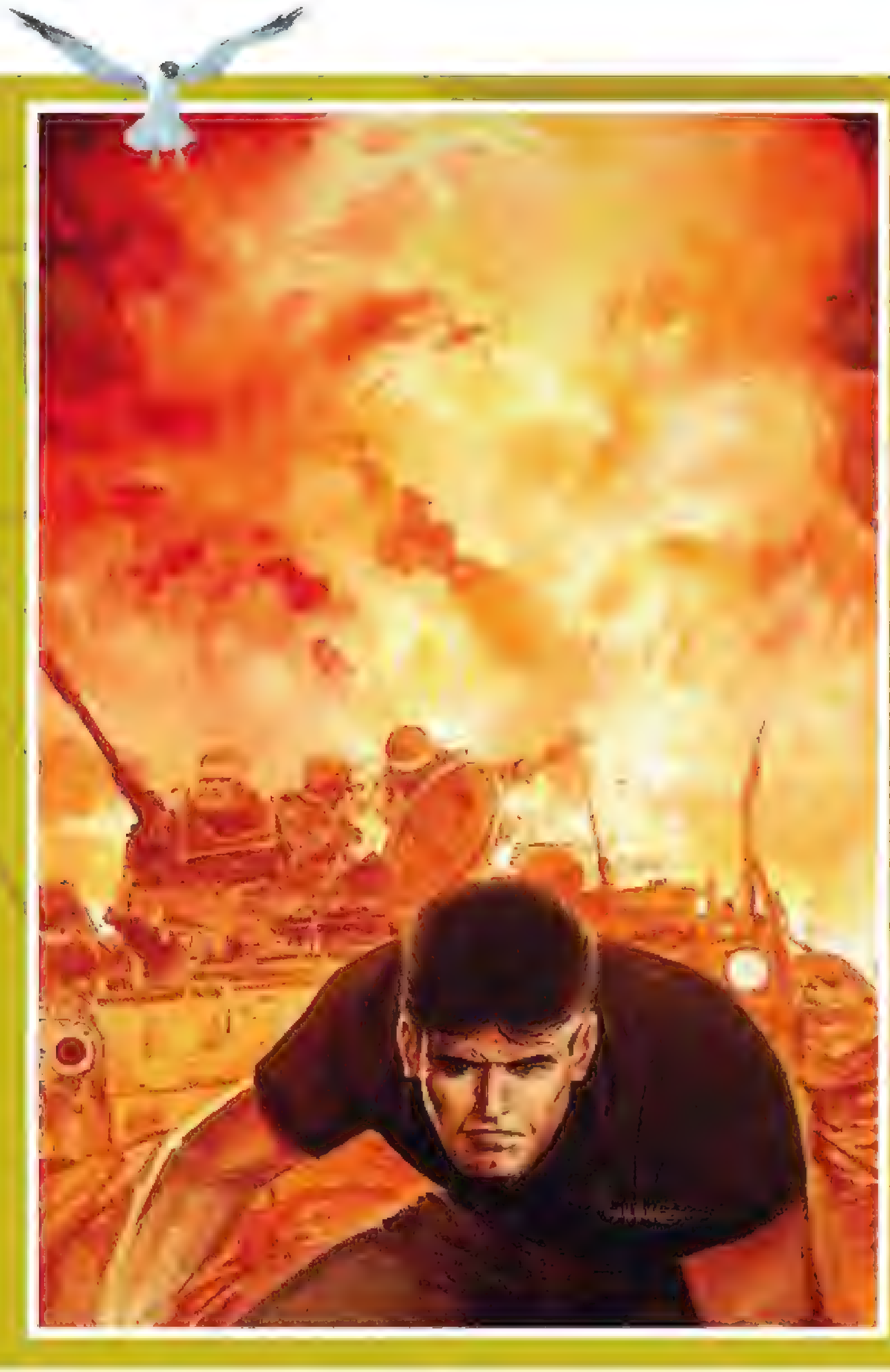
LEFT: Who is the mysterious XIII? Cinebook will help you find out...

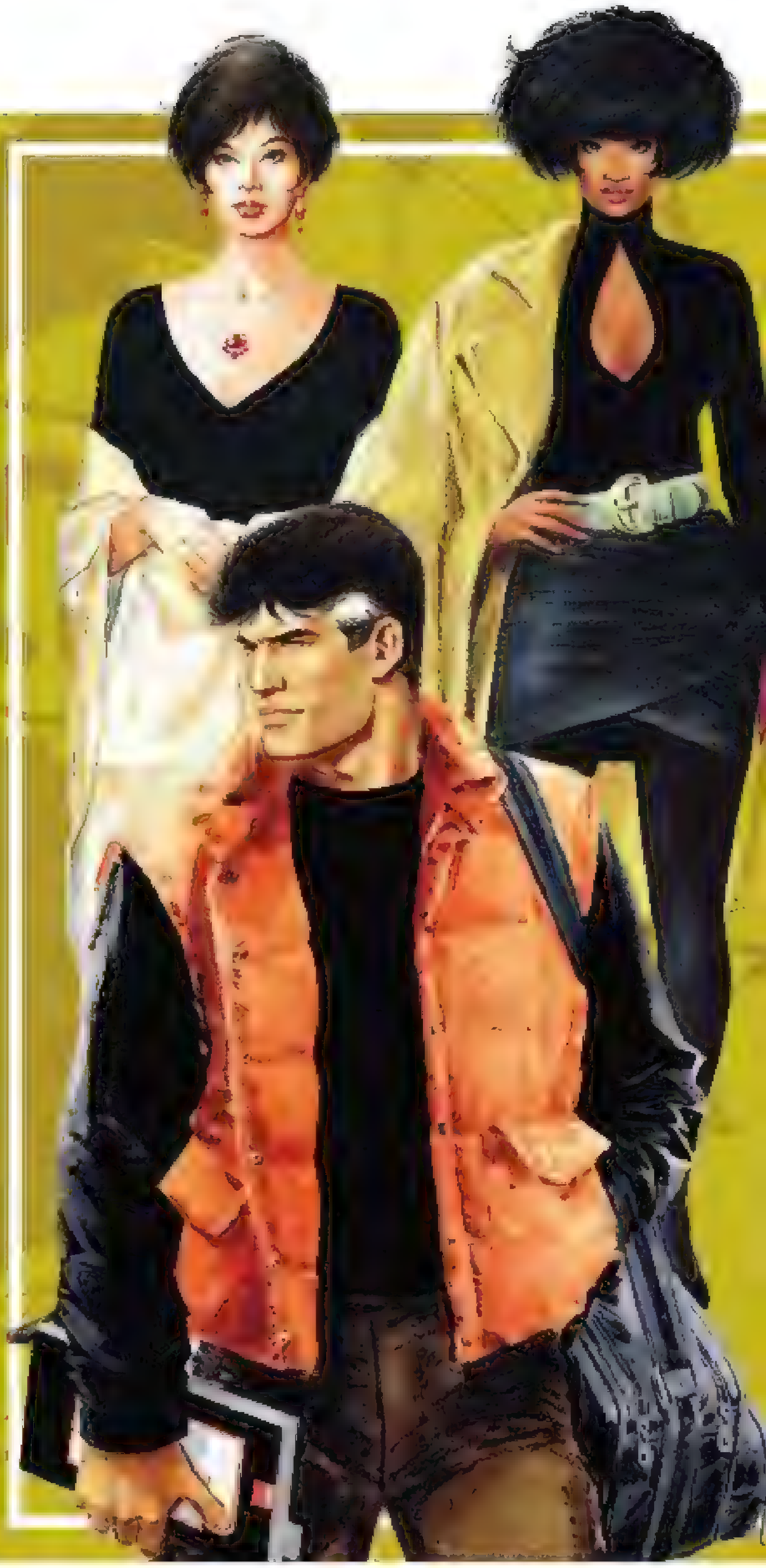
IDENTITY CRISIS

If this initial premise sounds somewhat familiar, that's because Van Hamme took his inspirational spark from Robert Ludlum's 1980 spy novel *The Bourne Identity*, but he quickly developed *XIII* in a different direction and gave it an identity of its own. Right from the start, Van Hamme hooks you in with sudden twists and turns, often cutting away from a scene at a cliffhanger moment, to keep you stewing and stoke up your anticipation for what's coming next. As the writer puts it, "*XIII* is a saga where the reader should expect me to pull out the one rabbit they don't expect." In this magic act of escalating »

"XIII IS A SAGA WHERE THE READER SHOULD EXPECT ME TO PULL OUT THE ONE RABBIT THEY DON'T EXPECT"

All images © Cinebook





TOP LEFT AND RIGHT: There are shades of *Bourne* and *Bond* in *XIII*, but it's definitely its own thing.

RIGHT: Guns, girls and amnesia. *XIII* has all three, and much more besides. Yup

ABOVE: William Vance, the man behind *XIII*'s gorgeous artwork

bluff, double-bluff and multiple-bluff, it becomes harder for XIII, and for us, to know who to trust. The story's political context is explosive, following a John F Kennedy-style assassination of liberal US President William B Sheridan, only added to by accusations and amateur film evidence. As for tracing the true perpetrators behind this killing, suspicions go all the way to the top and the corridors of power in Washington DC itself, as the campaign gets underway to elect the next president.

Conspiracy and counter-conspiracy, secrets of past lives and deaths, rivalries and relationships, harrowing psychiatric treatment in a top-security prison, a Ku Klux Klan plot and many more surprises combine with XIII's increasing list of aliases: Captain Steve Rowland, ex-officer of the Special Assault & Destruction Squads; Corporal Ross Tanner; mercenary Jason Fly. But when you start anew with a blank slate, which identity, if any, is real? As XIII jokes, "I'm getting used to changing identities with the weather." People are rarely what they seem in this deadly game and you can trust no-one, not even yourself.

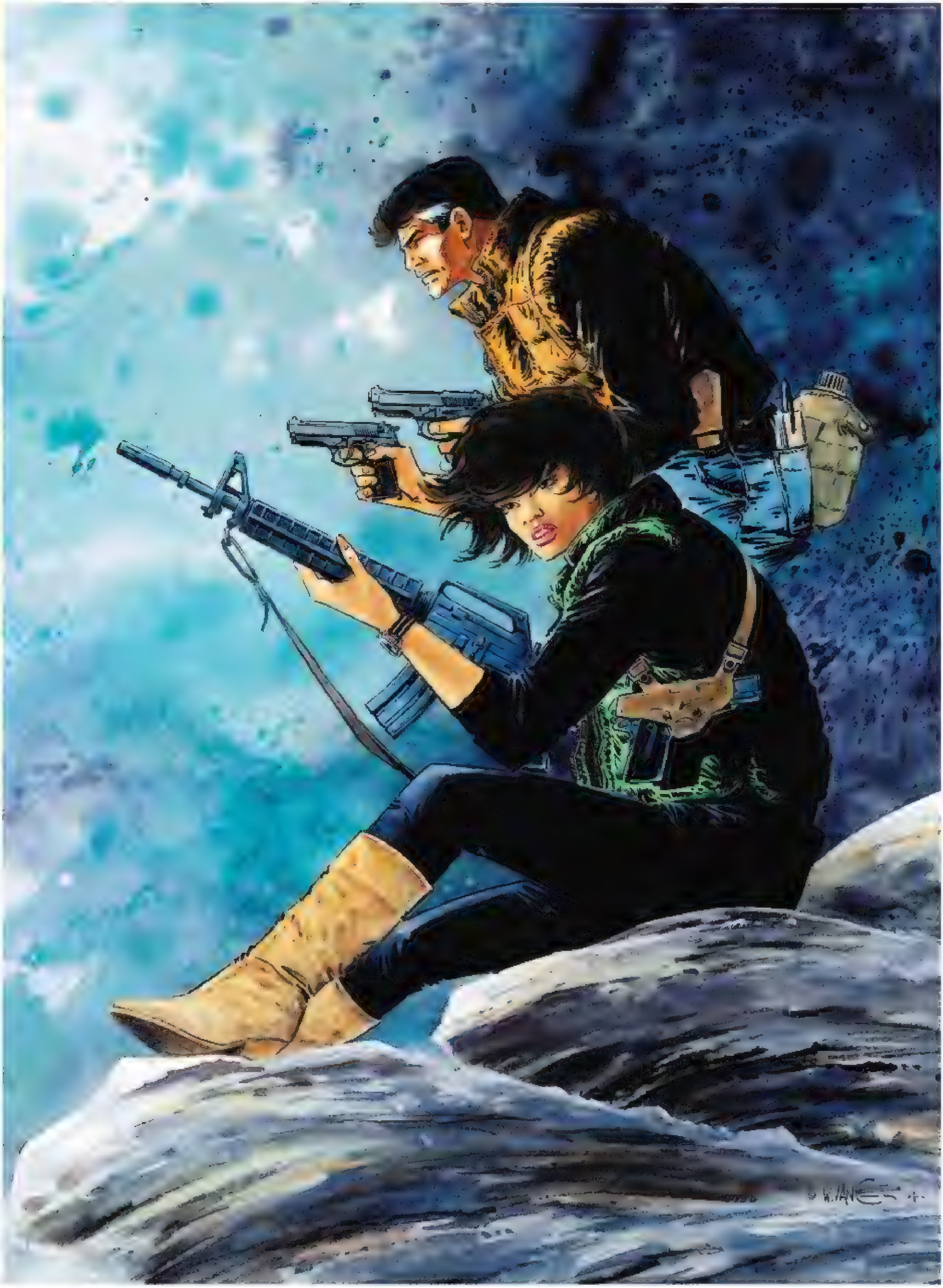
YEARS IN THE MAKING

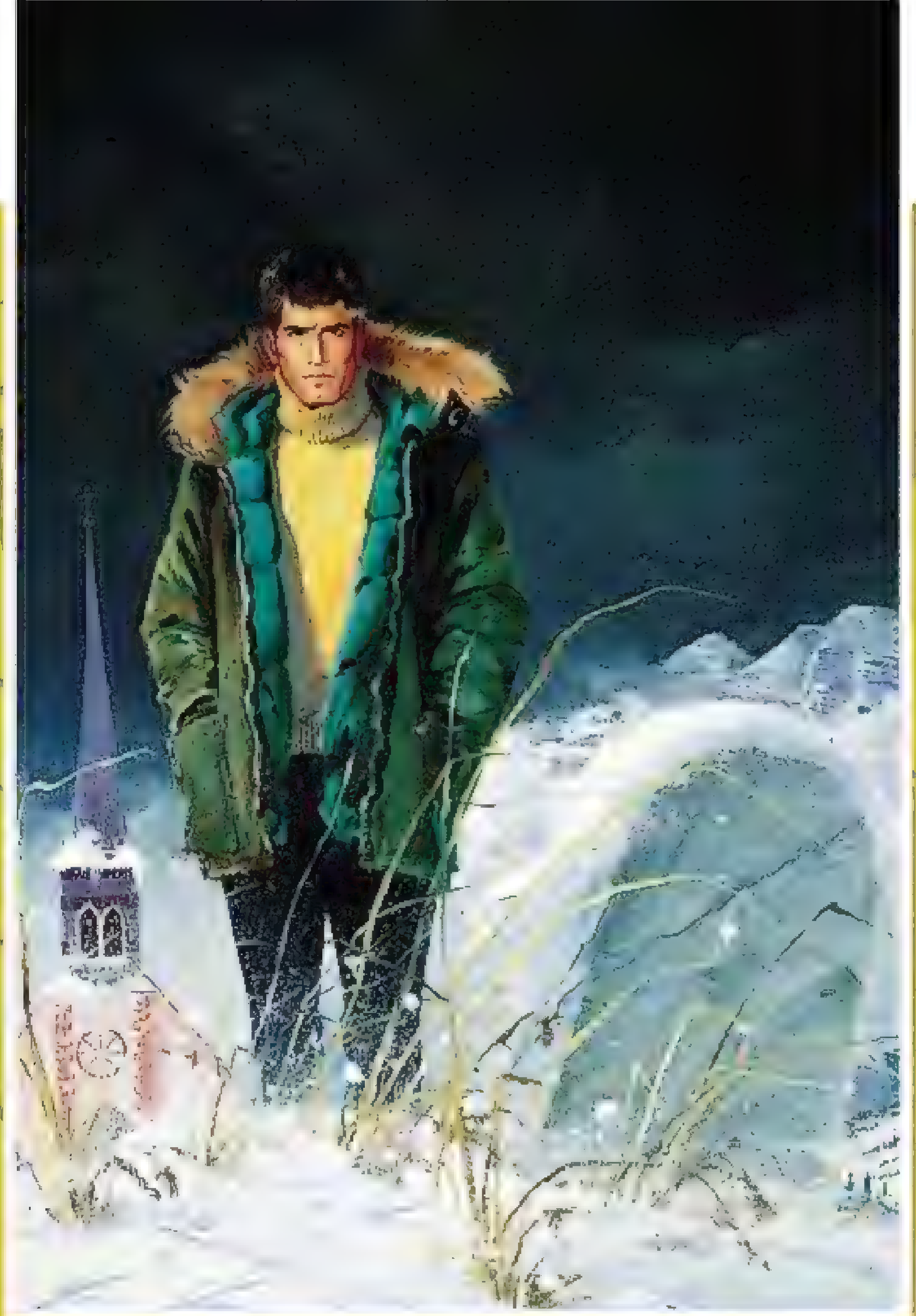
In many ways, *XIII* isn't so different from those addictive television serials such as *24* or *Lost*, except that instead of weekly programmes, each new 48-page graphic novel would take a year, sometimes two, to create. It's a testament to the strength of this story that thousands of French readers were prepared to wait for 19 episodes over 23 years, to unravel the mystery and finally discover the truth about XIII.

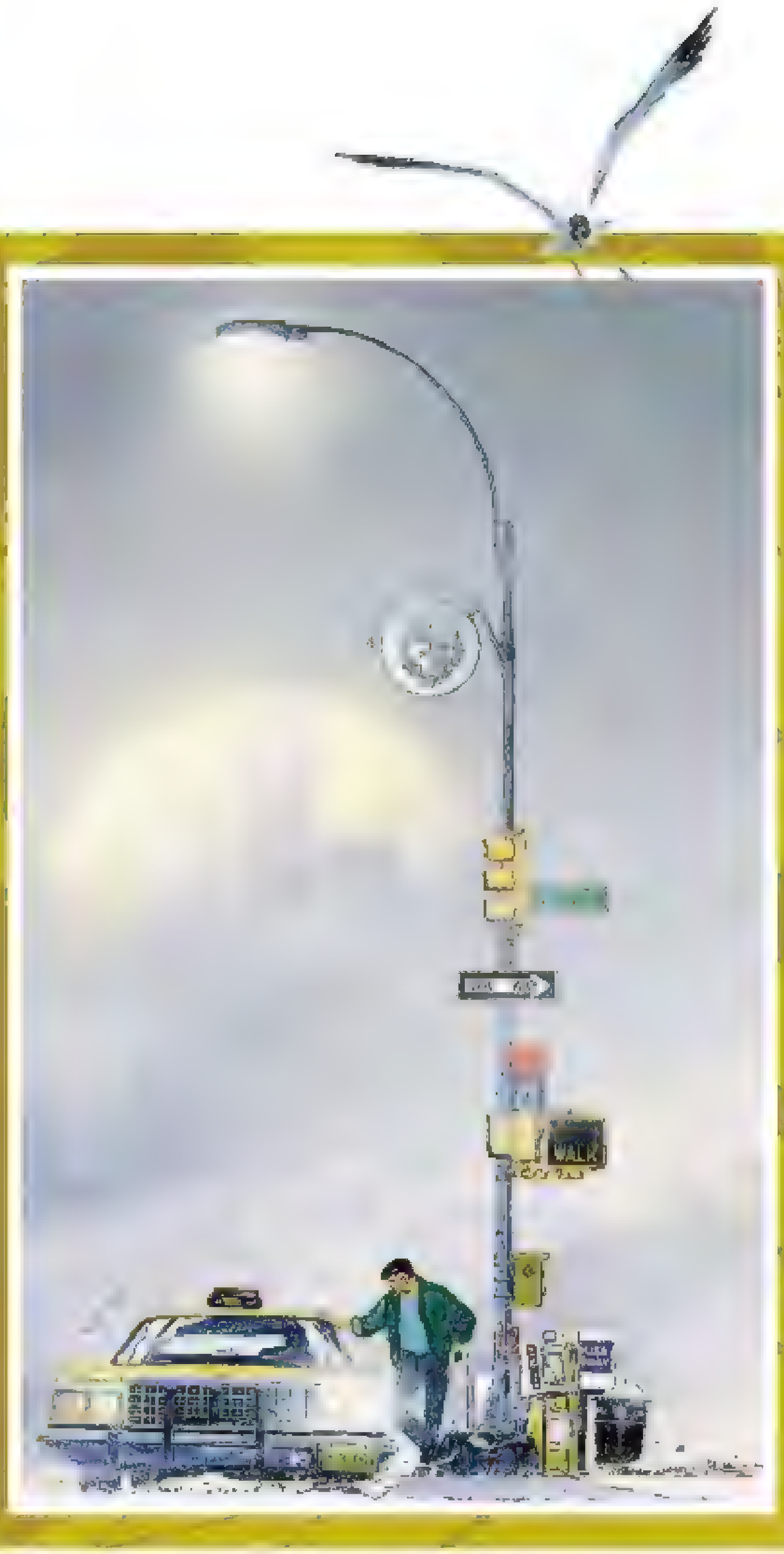
Over the decades since it began being serialised in the Belgian weekly comic *Spirou* in 1984, *XIII* has become astonishingly popular. The numbers speak for themselves. The print run of the compilation of the opening *XIII* story *The Day of The Black Sun* was a modest 7,000 copies, whereas the dramatic denouement, told in the two last albums, had a first printing of half a million copies each. And over those intervening years, 10 million *XIII* albums have been bought in French.

For Jean Van Hamme, an only son from a humble background who lost his mother at the age of two, writing comics was not his dream profession, although writing had been his private passion since he was 14. The closest he had come to working with the medium had been in the '60s, translating American newspaper strips *Blondie and Peanuts* into French, while studying for his degrees in engineering, economics, law and journalism.

Later, he also dabbled in writing a few scripts for short comics just as a hobby, while employed at US Steel. By the age of 37, married with a son and having risen up the ranks at Philips, Van Hamme decided that a desk-bound promotion was not for him. "After 12 years travelling around Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Asia in suit and tie, I found myself back in an office with an army of secretaries. I told myself that







ABOVE LEFT: XIII's distinctive white streak of hair is the result of a close call with a bullet.

ABOVE RIGHT: Vance's glorious backdrops are key to *XIII*'s visual appeal.

I didn't want to become a manager, that wasn't my vocation."

It was on 1 April that he quit his job and embarked on a new career as a full-time writer. "For six years, it was tough," he recalls, "but then I started to make a living from my comics." By then he had also written for movies, notably co-writing the screenplay adaptation of the Daniel Odier novel *Diva* for the stylish 1981 film directed by Jean-Jacques Beineix, as well as a series of prose novels about Largo Winch, the unlikely successor to a corporate empire, which he later converted into another massively popular comic series, illustrated by Philippe Francq. This in turn became a TV series and then a successful French-language movie in 2008, with a sequel now in production.

DESIGN INSPIRATIONS

XIII, meanwhile, has also grown into an extraordinary multi-media property, with a 2003 spin-off videogame and a 2008 two-part TV mini-series called *XIII: The Conspiracy* starring Val Kilmer and Stephen Dorff. Of course, none of this would be possible without the other vital element in a comic, the artist. William Vance is the pen-name of William Van Cutsem, a specialist since the mid '60s at *Tintin* magazine on rugged adventure heroes past and present, like Howard Flynn and Bruno Brazil, and later projects such as the naval drama *Bruce J Hawker*. Van Hamme and Vance were brought together when Vance's writer on *Bruno Brazil*, Greg, left for America without supplying him with the next script. Vance recalls, "I suggested making another series in the same style. The editor introduced me in 1982 to an unknown writer, Jean Van Hamme. Incidentally, Greg had been thinking of delegating the following *Bruno Brazil* story to him. I went to see him and we set off on the idea of *XIII*!"

Theirs is a perfect partnership. Vance brings the gritty realism, crisp clarity and superb composition that Van Hamme's scripts demand. He also enjoys dropping in slightly disguised American actors into the series. "Lee Marvin became the American General Carrington. For Jones, I was thinking of Whitney Houston. Heideger looks like Kissinger. But I make sure they aren't too close to these celebrities to avoid any problems!" From his expressive faces and expertly staged action to meticulous locations, Vance's precise linework is beautifully enhanced by the sophisticated colouring from his wife Petra. Vance has illustrated all but one of the *XIII* albums; in 2007, the penultimate 18th book, 'The Irish Version', featured the artistry of Jean Giraud, aka Moebius, profiled in *Comic Heroes 4*.

> "VANCE BRINGS THE GRITTY REALISM AND SUPERB COMPOSITION THAT VAN HAMME'S SCRIPTS DEMAND"

You might wonder why it's taken so long for English readers to be able to enjoy this Eurocomics blockbuster. In fact, we have had to endure three false starts from American publishers: first Catalan/Comcat in 1989; then Alias Comics in 2005; and lastly Dabiel Brothers with Marvel Comics in 2006 and 2007. And none of these got any further than the first three albums. You might almost think there was a conspiracy to ensure that this foreign, politically charged drama set in America would never properly catch on there.

Fortunately, last year, French entrepreneur Olivier Cadic, who founded the British publisher Cinebook in 2005, beat bigger bidders for the *XIII* series by guaranteeing to see the series right through to its climactic 19th volume. The sixth instalment, *The Jason Fly Case*, is out this March, and the final revelatory episode is due to arrive, rather appropriately, in the year 2013. Lucky for us!

SOMETHING WONDERFUL
WILL BE REVEALED

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HISTORY OF THE MARVEL® UNIVERSE

PART TWO

X-Men

In issue three, Chris Brosnahan helped guide you through the Marvel Universe, concentrating on the mighty Avengers. This time, he looks at the heroes who protect those who hate and fear them… the X-Men!

The X-Men were, like so much of early Marvel, the creation of Stan Lee and Jack Kirby. Spider-Man had proved that teenagers could make strong lead characters, so why not set up a teenage super-clan? Since team books and teenagers were in vogue, Marvel beat DC to its Teen Titans shaped punch by a year.

These new mutants appealed on multiple levels. Unlike most characters, who gained their extraordinary abilities through design or accident, mutants were born with powers, although they didn't manifest until puberty. Of course, with a certain amount of the readership going through adolescence, the strength that idea conveys is obvious.

On top of that, mutants were treated as a minority, enabling stories to be told about racism and homophobia, while still allowing the requisite amounts of action and explosions.

MARVEL COMICS
X-MEN
33

The X-Men: great at synchronised dancing.

All images © Marvel

The set-up was simple. Professor Xavier's School for Gifted Youngsters is actually a front for a trained group of freedom fighters – Angel, Beast, Cyclops, Iceman and Jean Grey – tackling the persecution that they face to show that mutants and humans can live in peace. They are opposed by Xavier's former friend Magneto and his Brotherhood of Evil Mutants (more recently, it's been explained they were named ironically), who believe in total mutant rule.

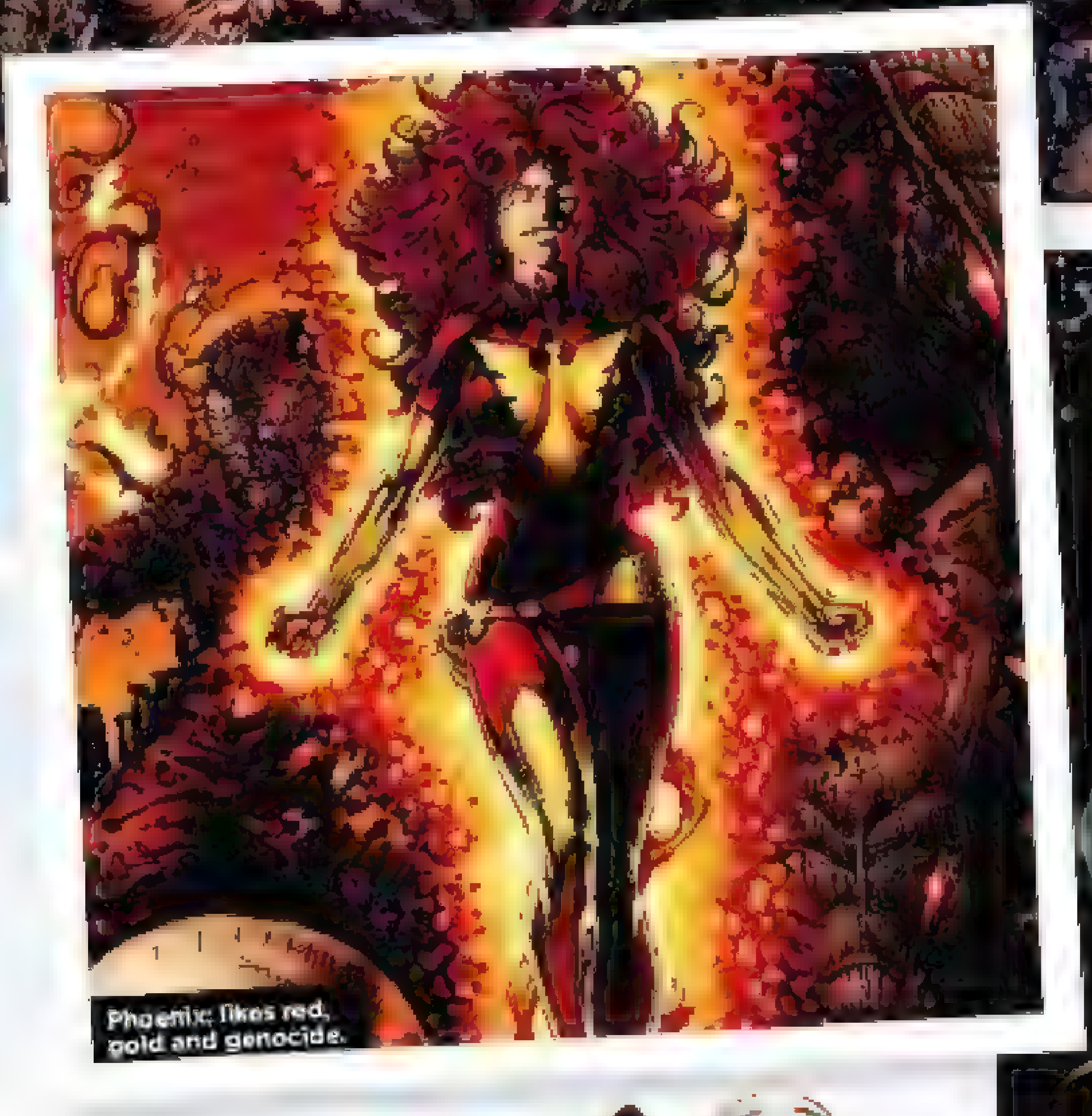
The series quickly became larger than that, but it struggled to find popularity. It was cancelled in 1969, despite the run by Roy Thomas and Neal Adams being seen as a creative high point, and went into reprints for the next few years.

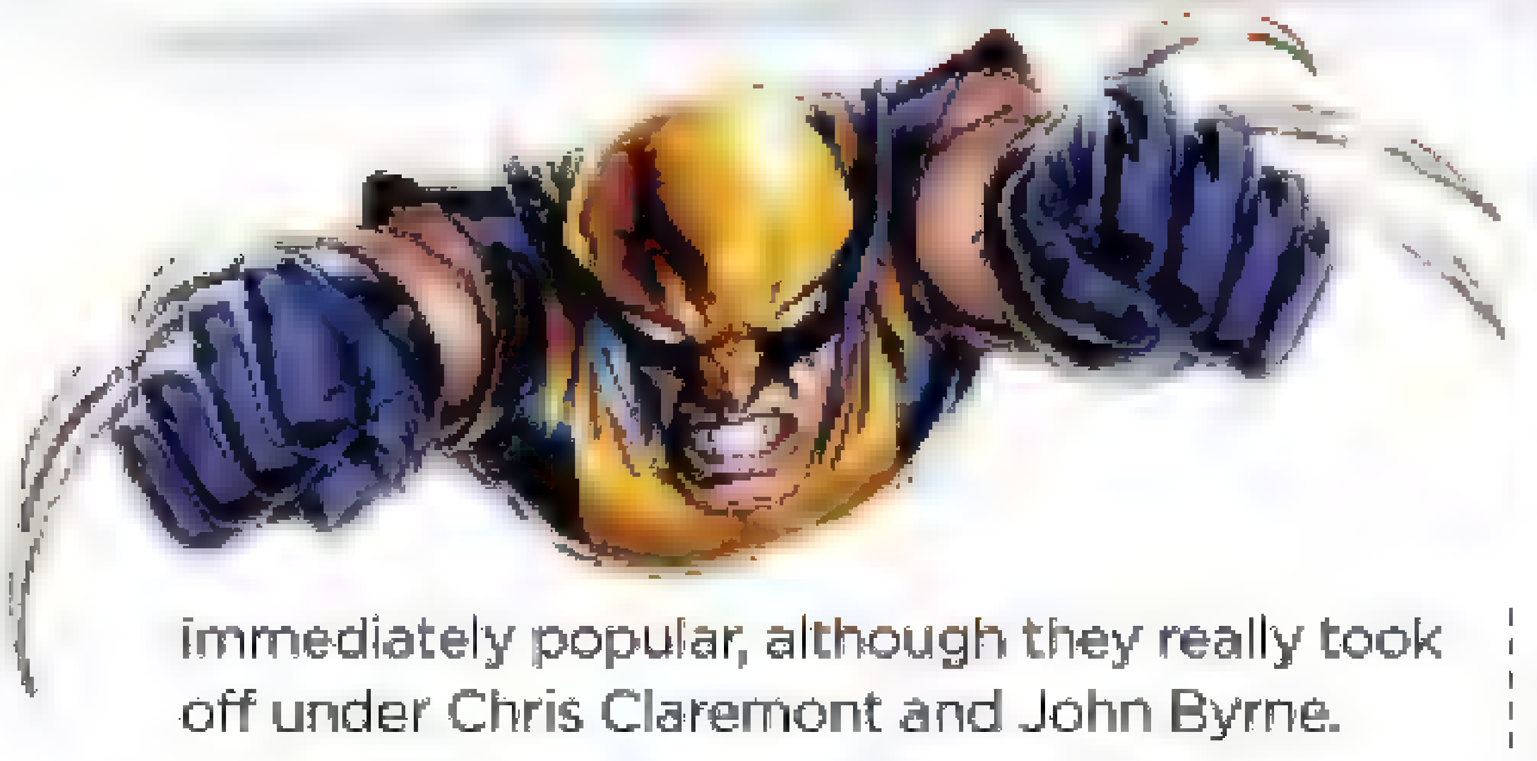
The title was reinvented in 1975 as a special *Giant-Size X-Men* with one of the most iconic covers ever, featuring the new team bursting out of an image of the older team. This new team was more international, featuring the Irish Banshee, the African Storm, the Russian Colossus, Native American Warpath, the German Nightcrawler, the Japanese Sunfire and the Canadian Wolverine. These new characters, created by Len Wein and Dave Cockrum, were »

> "THE SET-UP WAS SIMPLE. PROFESSOR XAVIER'S SCHOOL FOR GIFTED YOUNGSTERS IS ACTUALLY A FRONT"

TERRY
DODSON
RACHEL

OUT ON US-- AND I'LL HAVE YOU LOCKED UP!
NOW
DIDN'T GET MY MEANING, FRIEND
STILL A FREE COUNTRY ISN'T IT?
MY COMMISSION--
--EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY!
UNLESS, OF COURSE, YOU HAVE ANY FURTHER OBJECTIONS?
I DIDN'T
BELIEVE ME, MISTER--YOU HAVEN'T HEARD THE LAST OF THIS.
ANY TIME YOU WANT ME YOU KNOW WHERE TO COME LOOKING!
COME ON PROF--LET'S GO!


Phoenix: likes red, gold and genocide.



immediately popular, although they really took off under Chris Claremont and John Byrne.

The new creative team pushed the series more towards the epic. A hallmark of Claremont's was to thread storylines that would run over months, years or even decades. Throughout the eighties and nineties, this was something the X-titles were famous for; a throwaway remark that had appeared 50 issues earlier could end up being hugely important. Or, indeed, not.

The most important of these was the Phoenix Saga. Much like DC's *Crisis*, the Phoenix Saga has become more and more convoluted over time. The basic idea of the storyline is that Jean Grey gets possessed and corrupted by a sentient interstellar force known as The Phoenix. The Phoenix goes out of control, eventually destroying an entire world. Jean is sentenced to be executed by the Shi'ar and kills herself after the X-Men try to save her, paying for her sins.

However, it then got complicated. A lookalike of Jean Grey turned up called Madelyne Pryor, who got married to Cyclops and had a child with him called Nathan. Then it turned out that it wasn't Jean Grey at all, as Jean had been found in stasis under the ocean, where she had remained following the original storyline. The Phoenix had created a duplicate of Jean. And then it turned out that Madelyne was actually a clone all along, but with latent Phoenix abilities, and she became the Goblin Queen. Before Madelyne dies, Jean reabsorbs the Phoenix part of her, including memories of the time, allowing her to become Nathan's mother.

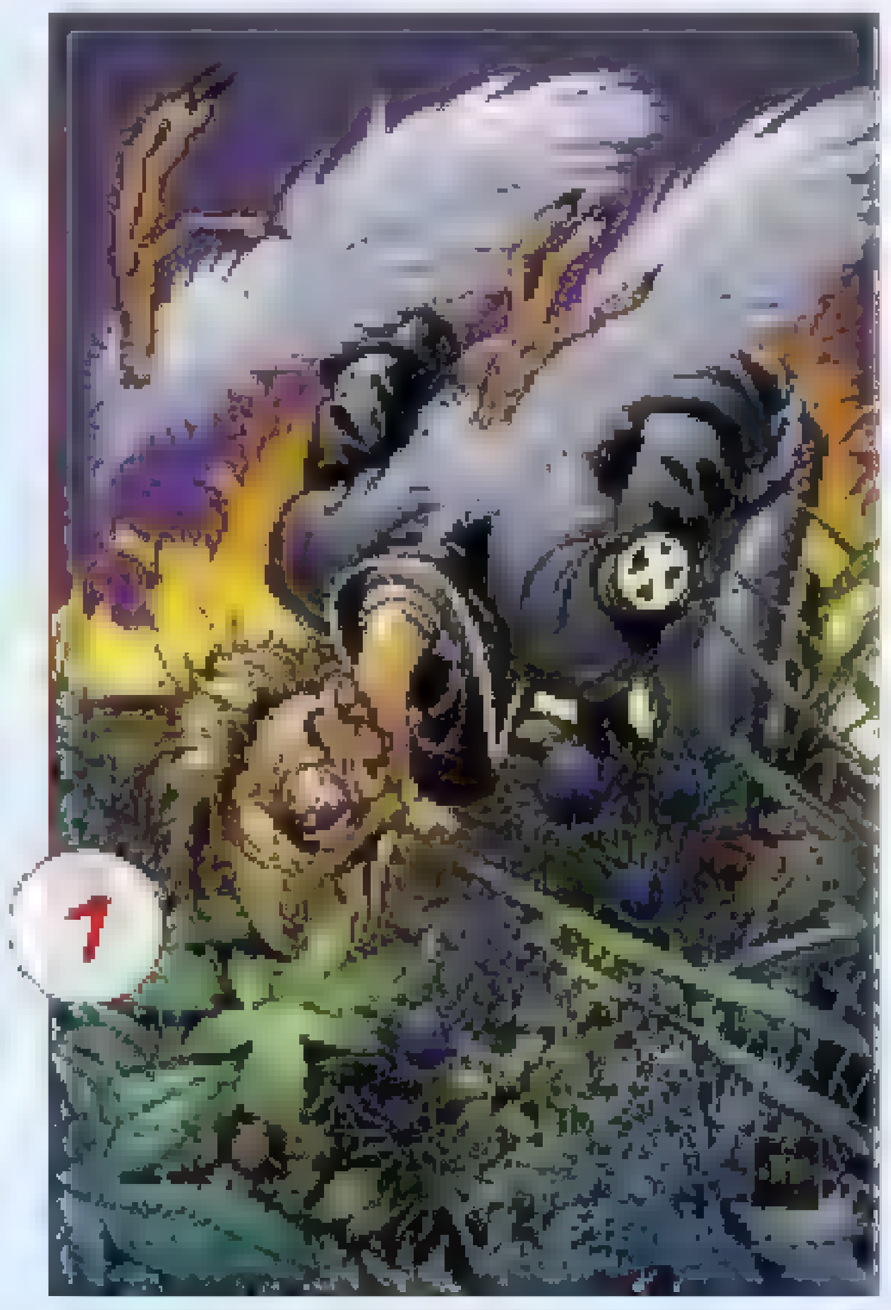
Nathan, however, had to be sent to the future in order to cure a techno-organic virus and was raised there by the Clan Askani. He was also raised by Scott and Jean, who had been »

"THE BASIC IDEA OF THE STORYLINE IS THAT JEAN GREY GETS POSSESSED AND CORRUPTED BY A SENTIENT INTERSTELLAR FORCE KNOWN AS THE PHOENIX"

FIVE WORST X-MEN

Not every character can be a Wolverine, a Storm, a Cyclops or even a Chamber. While they may have been involved in some good stories, some of the X-Men have just been rubbish. Sometimes it's the powers, sometimes it's the characters. But here are five of the worst offenders.

1

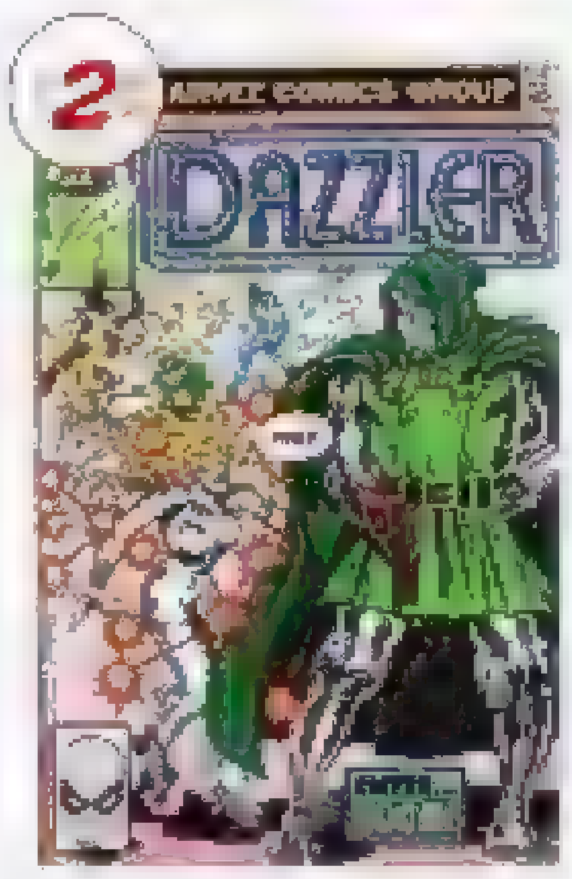


BEAK

Barnell Bohusk fled from Rotterdam after his mutant power turned out to be slowly turning into a birdman with no real powers. He had a beaked face, talons and rubbish wings. He could sort of fly a bit and if really pushed could try to peck his enemies to death.

In fairness, Grant Morrison created Beak in order to be rubbish, so it was part of the point of his character, and he was in some great stories. But still, he's pretty useless. Ironically, in the current comics he's lost all of his powers, but become a bit of a badass.

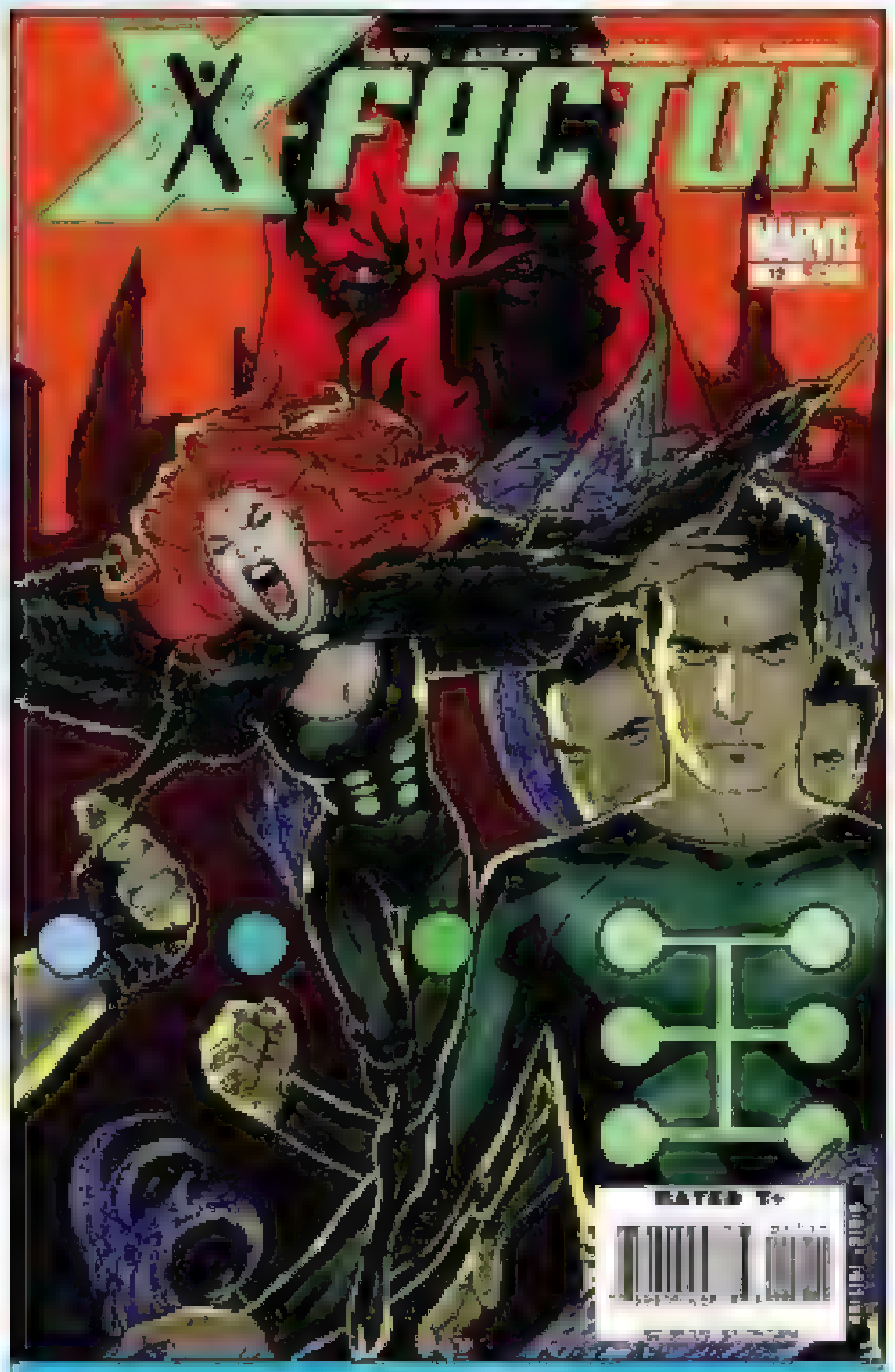
2



DAZZLER

Dazzler (AKA Alison Blare) is a disco star with the ability to convert soundwaves into light and energy. The character was originally created as a tie-in with Casablanca Records, who intended to have a real-life crossover pop sensation Dazzler, but the deal fell through. Thankfully for Marvel, though, the disco craze would go on for decades. Oh. Dazzler is actually quite popular and has been involved with the X-Men for decades. But still... disco?

Spin-offs



X-FACTOR

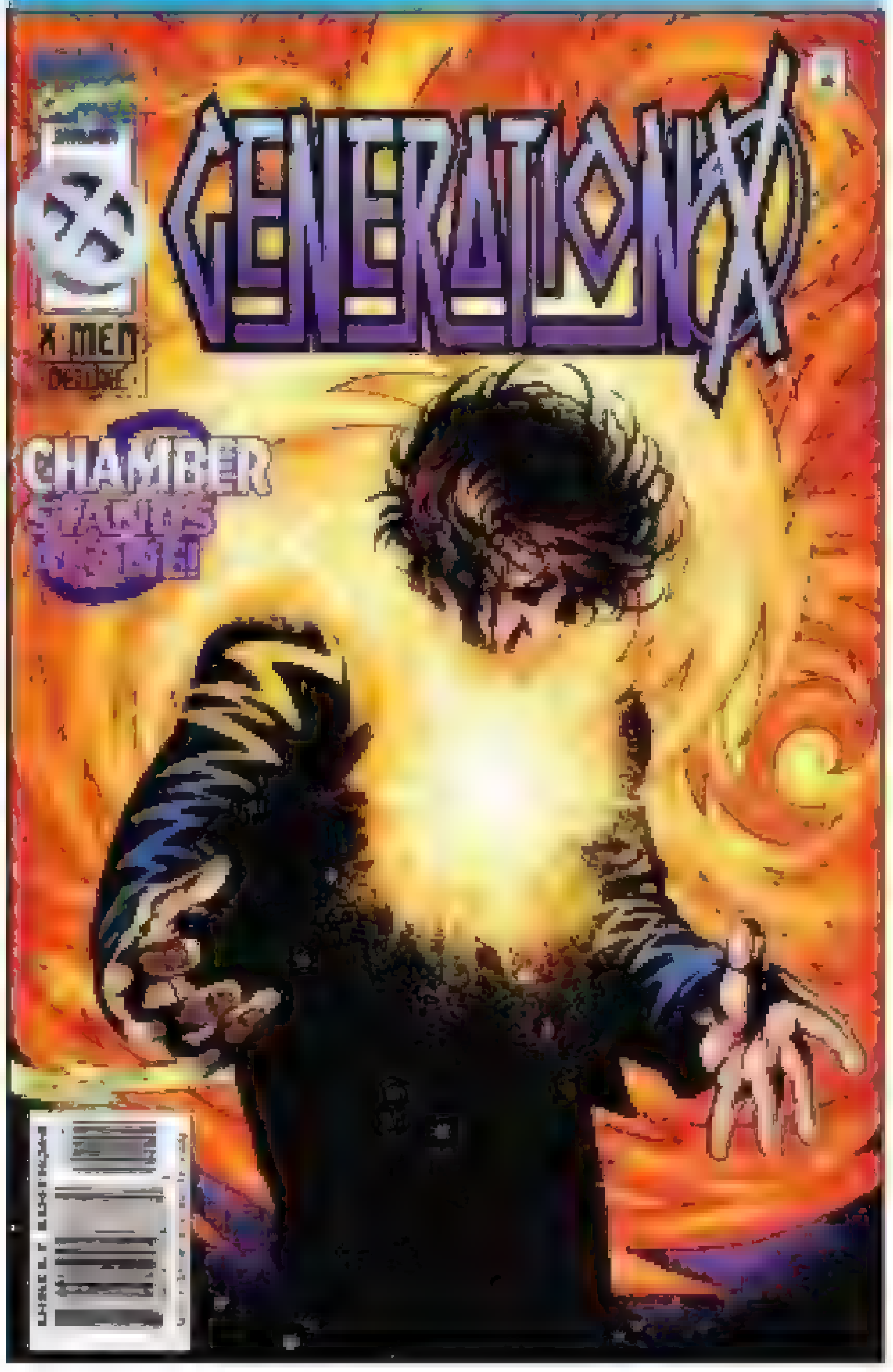
This title started off as a reunion of the original five X-Men, pretending to be mutant-hunters but actually protecting them. It was a lot of fun, but the defining run on the title has to be Peter David's. During his first run, the team were a government funded one, led by Cyclops's younger brother Havok.

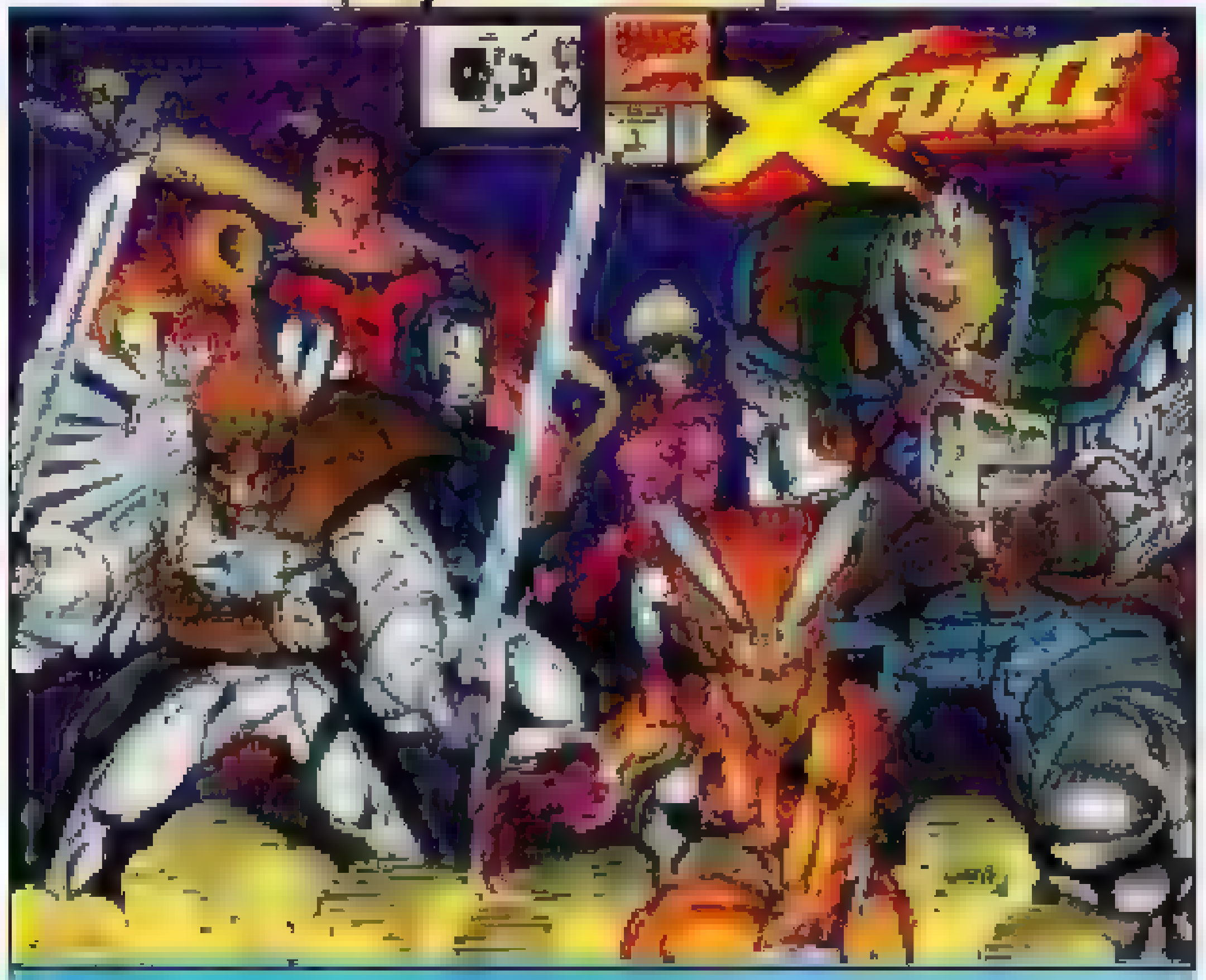
X-Factor was relaunched in 2005, again written by Peter David. The new team functions as private investigators and is led by the Multiple Man Jamie Madrox. Sexy, funny and smart, this is the most consistent X-Men title on the shelves. It's also produced some of the most memorable moments in X-history – the most recent being the shocking revelation of Madrox and Siryn's baby.

GENERATION X

This was a nineties title that went back to the idea of the Xavier Institute being a place of education. The White Queen and Banshee led the group of mutants who were struggling to control their powers. Created by Scott Lobdell and Chris Bachalo, *Generation X* is very fondly remembered by fans.

It's also remembered because of a [illegible] television movie based on it, which can be found in its entirety on YouTube. Oddly, and for no good reason, Jubilee declares in one scene that the "[illegible] [illegible] my pants", which is hardly in keeping with the tone of the source. It was hoped it would go on to become a television series, but is worth watching if you're after a giggle.





X-FORCE

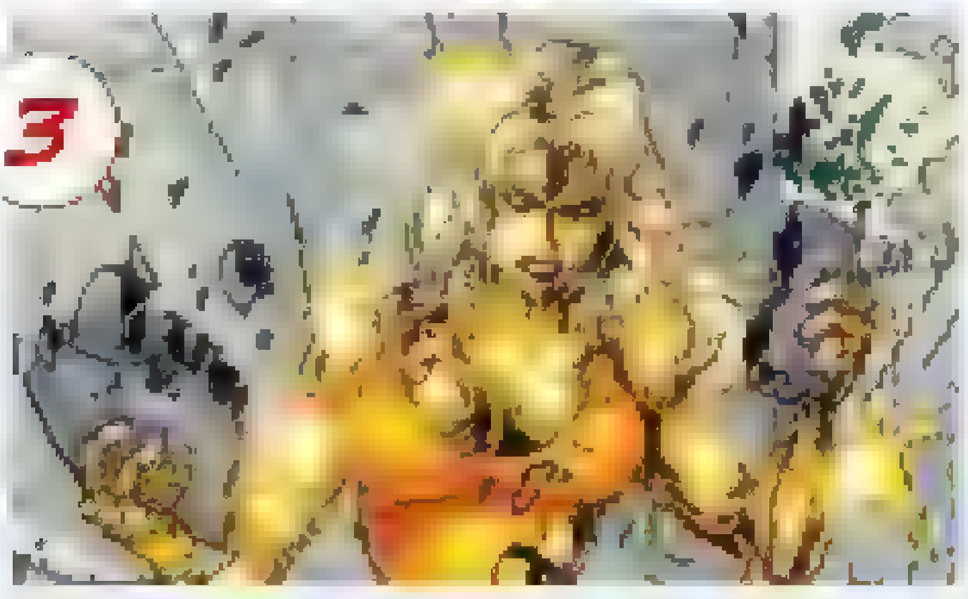
This is basically the X-Men's black ops team. Originally, they were the New Mutants, which was a more kid-friendly title. When Cable took over, he pushed a more aggressive style. Created by Rob Liefeld, *X-Force* was an enormous hit at the time, selling five million copies.

More recently, the name has been used for Wolverine's team, who perform the missions that the X-Men can't. This tends to be a very violent book these days, but is great for the action fans.

LIFEGUARD

A gold covered female Colossus. With wings. And extra arms. Who used to be a surfer. It's generally believed that this character was created purely because Colossus had been killed. Lifeguard (Heather Cameron) was probably overpowered, but fans never warmed to her and she now resides in the 'who cares where they are now?' file.

3



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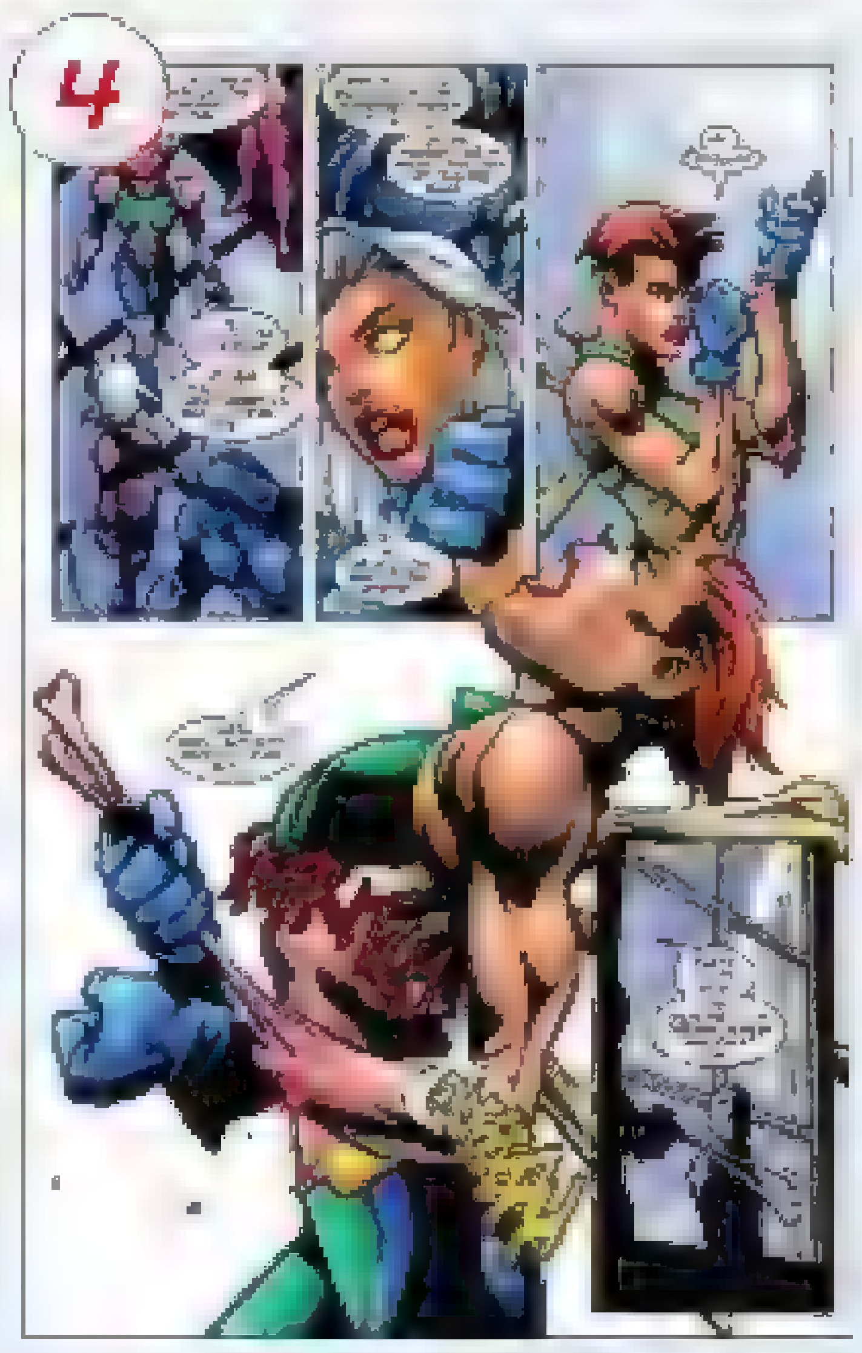
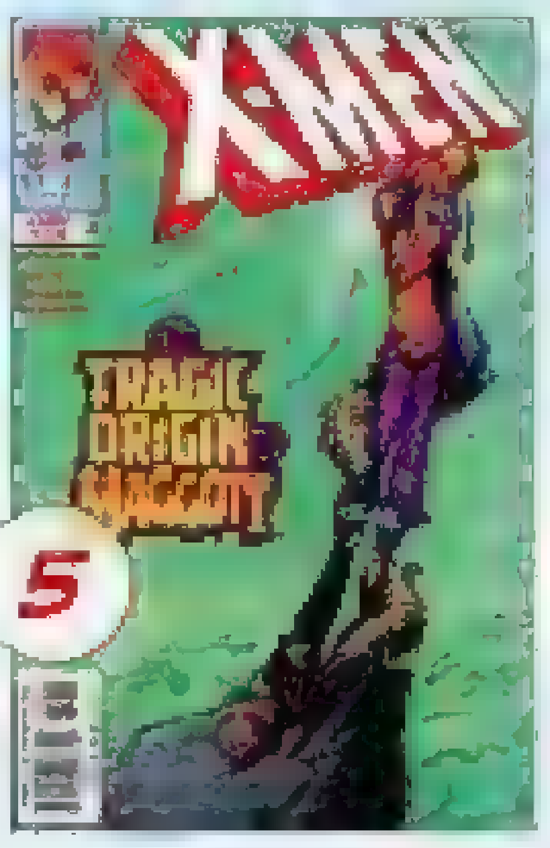


MARROW

Marrow could have been interesting. Raised in the sewers by the Morlocks (a group of mutants who were too odd-looking to live normally), she became the leader of the terrorist group Gene Nation. Her powers included a healing factor and being able to grow her skeleton into spiky protrusions and rip them out. But the wild child aspect that was interesting about her was thrown away. She just wanted to be loved. And an alien machine made her prettier. A character who had been against convention became the ultimate 'but... you're beautiful' cliché.



5

MAGGOTT

Maggott (AKA Japheth) had two mechanical maggots that ate anything in their paths. He would then absorb them, turn blue and become super-strong. Yup, it sounds pretty ridiculous before you even get to his origin story – he was a sickly boy in South Africa whose mutant digestive system was destroying him from within. Coincidentally, Magneto bumped into him and helped him turn his troublesome innards into the two mechanical larvae, Eany and Meany. He then joined Generation X. For an issue. Then he turned up years later in a mutant concentration camp and was killed. Nobody really cared.

»

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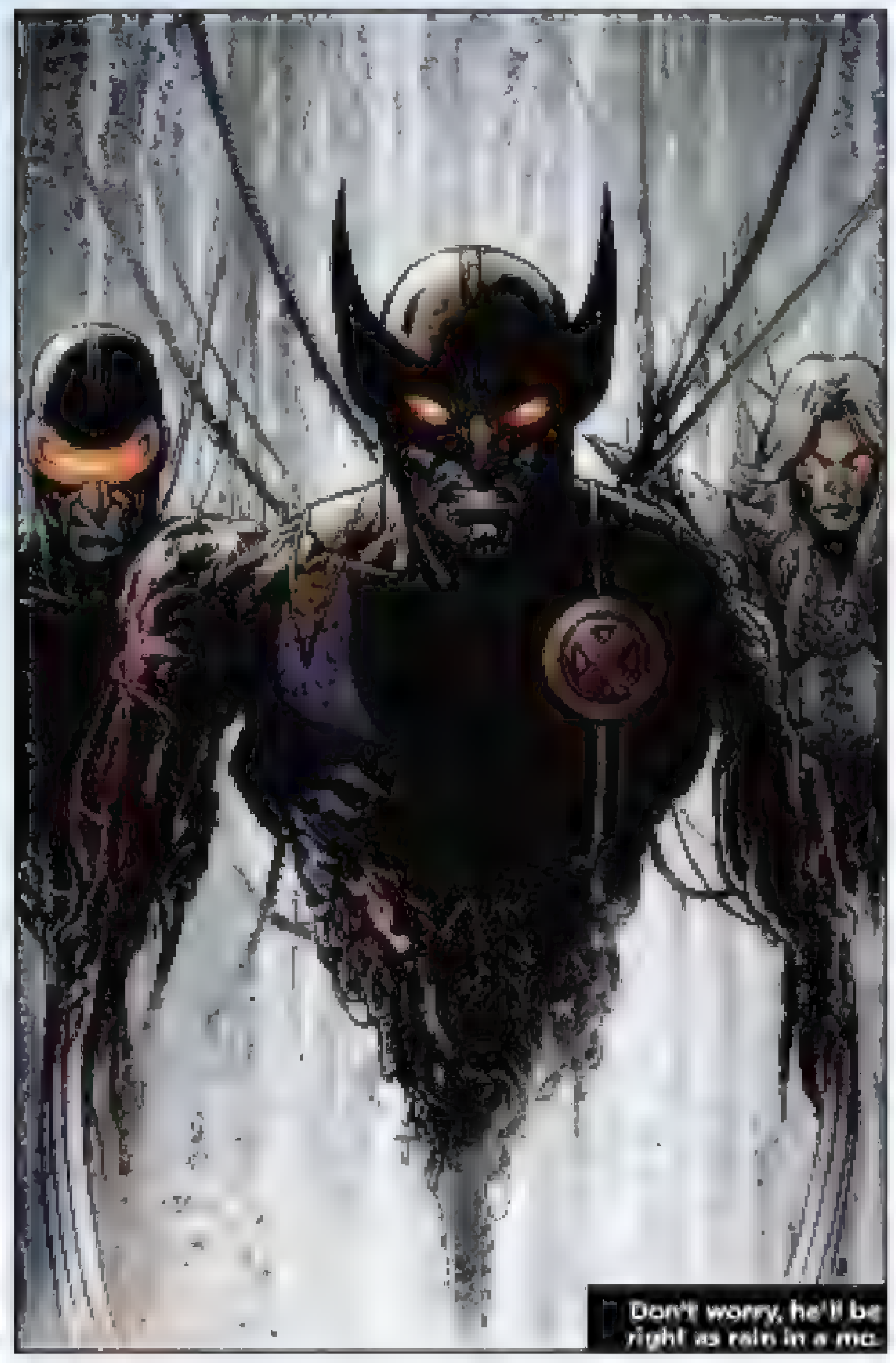


Don't worry, he'll be right as rain in a mo.

brought to the future to help secretly guide him by Rachel Summers, an aged version of Jean and Scott's daughter from an alternate future timeline. Eventually, Nathan became the freedom fighter Cable and got sent back to the present to fight the villains Apocalypse (see box, page 84) and Stryfe, an evil clone of himself. To sum it all up, Cable's full name is Nathan Christopher Charles Askani'son Dayspring Summers.

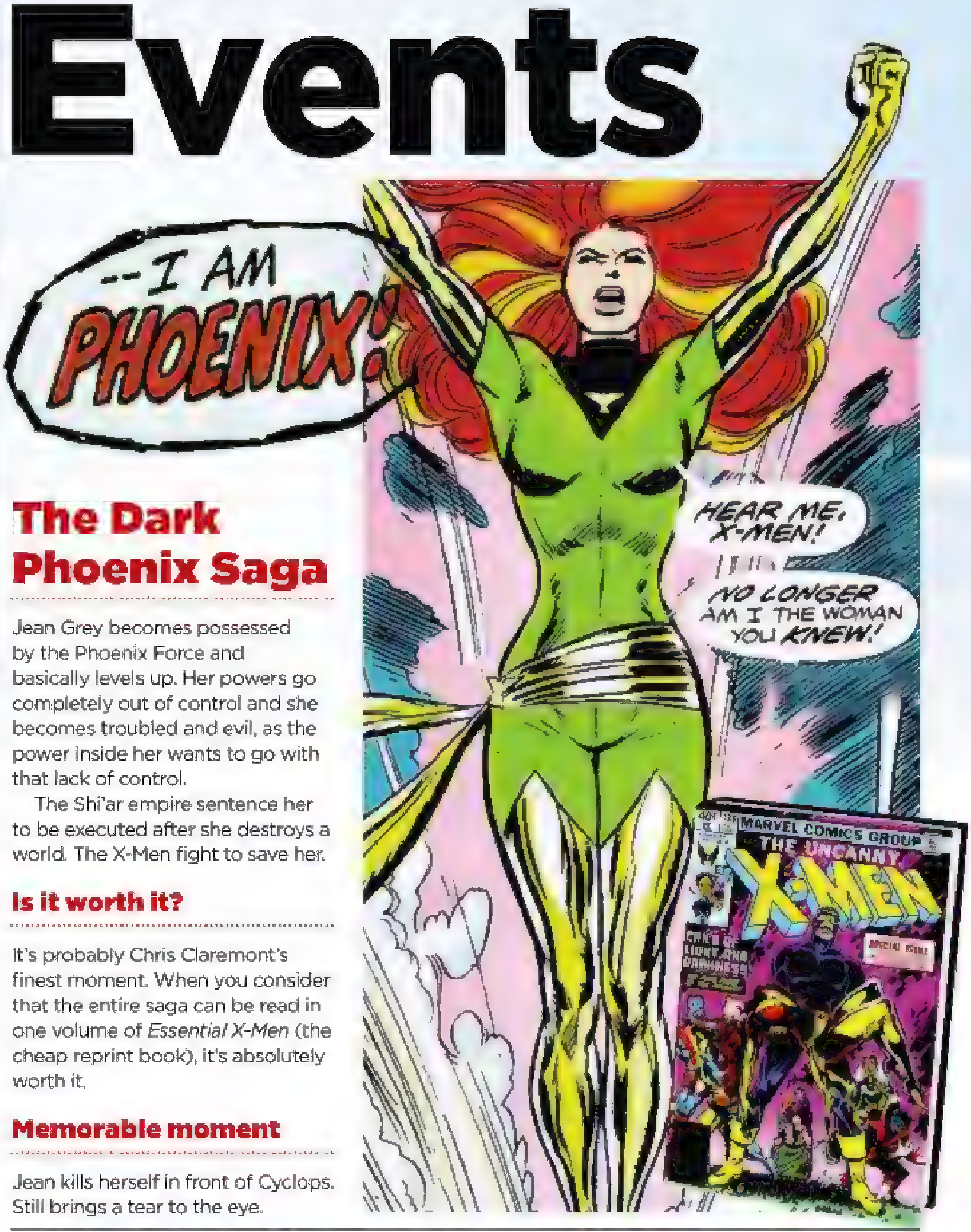
We did say complicated. And this is just the style of *X-Men*. There are mysteries, details and complications everywhere. Add in multiple spin-off series and cross-over stories and it's not easy to get into.

This happens partially because the X-Men franchise uses time travel and alternate universes. It's also a series that has had a lot of writers, a number of whom have changed up the status quo, or reverted back to it. Finally, it happens because of the enormous cast – there have been 78 members of the X-Men, not including the spin-off teams. As complicated as it may all be, this isn't necessarily a bad thing – after all, one person's 'inaccessible' is another person's 'rich with details', and it can lead to very loyal fans.

X-Men takes some getting into. But just remember the simplicity of the concept and you'll find your way around easily. Any franchise that's as large as X-Men is complicated. But with writers including Stan Lee, Len Wein, Chris Claremont, Fabien Nicieza, Warren Ellis, Grant Morrison, Mike Carey and Matt Fraction, and artists including John Byrne, John Romita Jr, Jim Lee, Whilce Portacio, Chris Bachalo, Alan Davis and Joe Madureira, there's absolutely no doubt that there's been some incredible talent on the series.

By the end of the '60s, *X-Men* was cancelled as a commercial failure. In 1991, the relaunched *X-Men* #1 became the highest selling single issue of a comic book in history, with a reported 7.6 million copies sold. It's had a successful animated series and four blockbuster movies. The ultimate outsiders have ended up becoming very mainstream.

Events


--I AM PHOENIX!
HEAR ME, X-MEN!
NO LONGER AM I THE WOMAN YOU KNEW!
MARVEL COMICS GROUP
THE UNCANNY X-MEN
SPECIAL ISSUE

The Dark Phoenix Saga

Jean Grey becomes possessed by the Phoenix Force and basically levels up. Her powers go completely out of control and she becomes troubled and evil, as the power inside her wants to go with that lack of control.

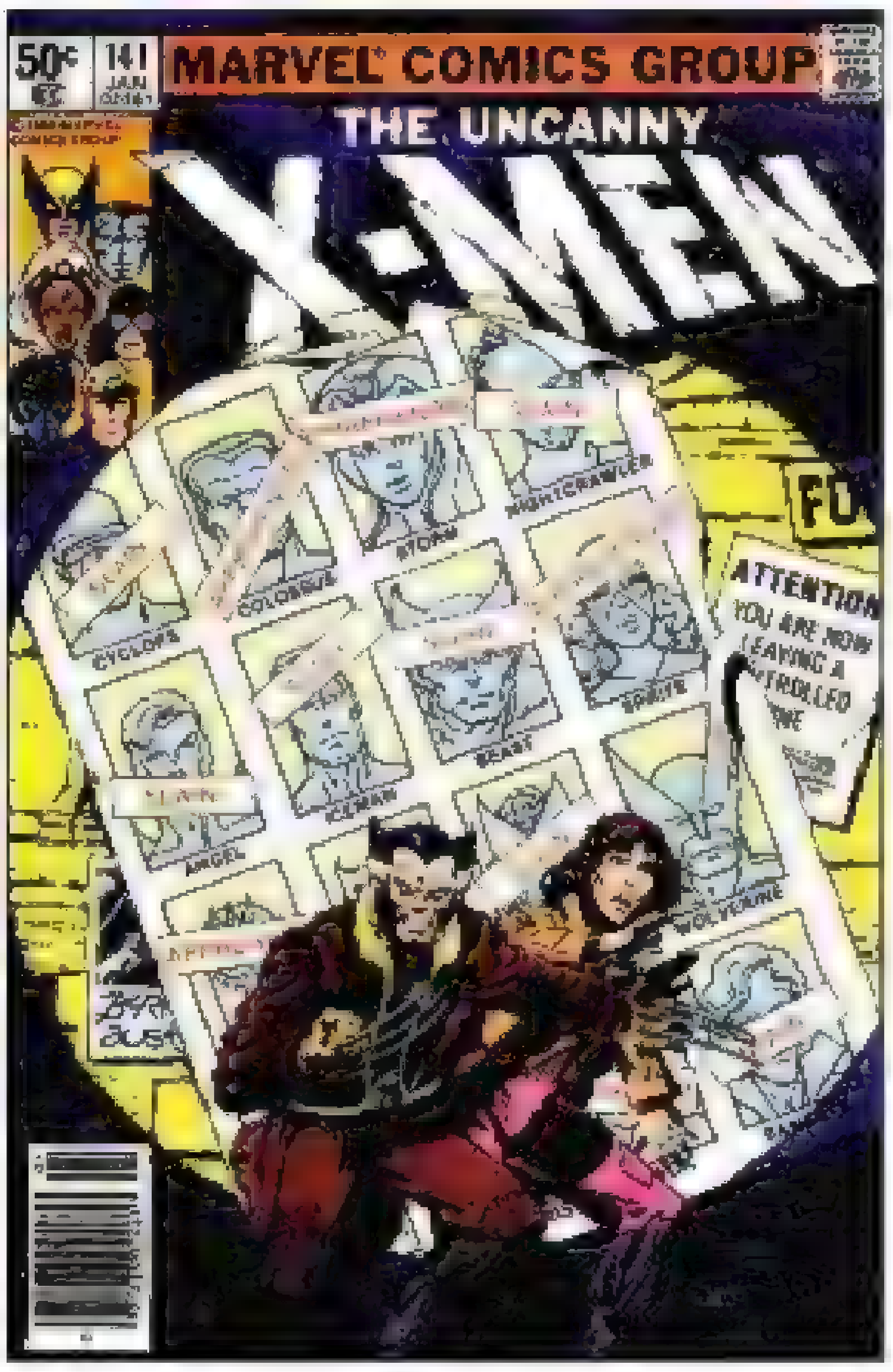
The Shi'ar empire sentence her to be executed after she destroys a world. The X-Men fight to save her.

Is it worth it?

It's probably Chris Claremont's finest moment. When you consider that the entire saga can be read in one volume of *Essential X-Men* (the cheap reprint book), it's absolutely worth it.

Memorable moment

Jean kills herself in front of Cyclops. Still brings a tear to the eye.



Days Of Future Past

This is where the whole time travelling thing came in. Kitty Pryde's future self possesses her, in order to make sure that the X-Men prevent an assassination that will lead to a terrible future. In her future, the sentinels rule over mutants, who are placed in internment camps.

The story flips back and forward between the last surviving X-Men in the future and the present day storyline. Again, this was written during Chris Claremont's peak.

Is it worth it?

It's a great dystopian story. As before, if you don't mind black and white reprints, it's part of volume #2 of *Essential X-Men*.

Memorable moment

It's actually a cover. The cover to #141 is one of the most homaged in comic book history, featuring an aged Wolverine and Kitty Pryde in front of a series of 'wanted' posters.

»

Age Of Apocalypse

Probably the biggest self-contained epic in Marvel's history, in which Charles Xavier's illegitimate son travels back to the past to kill Magneto, so his father can spend more time with him. Unfortunately, he screws it up and kills Xavier. Oops.

This means that Apocalypse puts his plans into effect years earlier, and with no X-Men around to stop him. Continents are wiped out and all the characters we know are replaced with alternate versions of themselves. The only person to remain is Bishop, who's a time traveller already. It all comes down to Magneto's X-Men to stand in Apocalypse's way and restore the regular reality. Marvel went so far with this as to cancel its entire X-Men line of comics and instead replace them with Apocalypse versions.

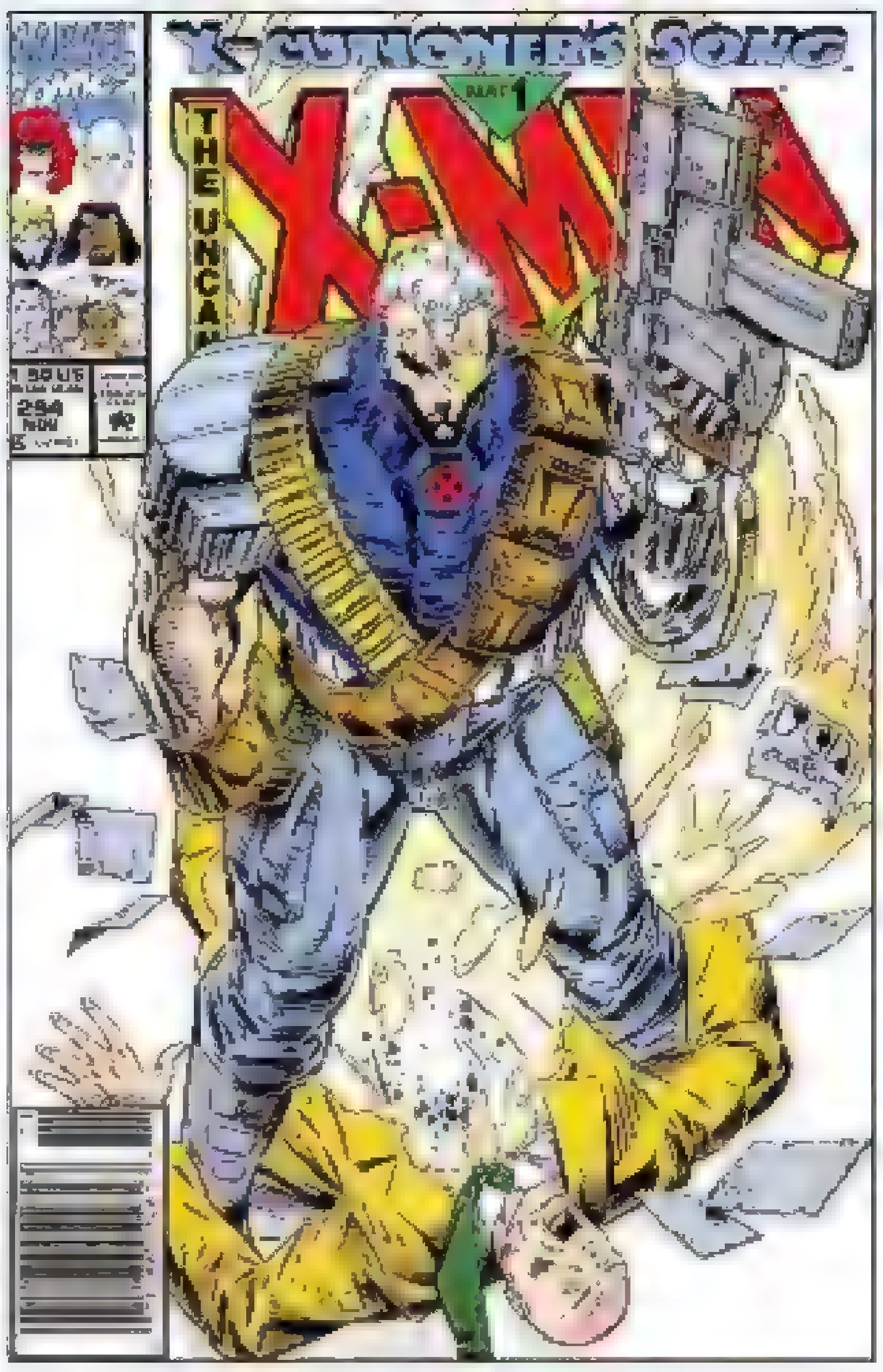
Is it worth it?

It's easily available, but it is pricey, as it's comprised of four big, thick paperbacks. We recommend skipping the first one, as it's made up of prequels and spin-offs, and starting with Volume 2. It's absolutely fantastic and the closest Marvel could come to something like *Lord Of The Rings*. Huge, epic storytelling.

Memorable moment

The first scene in the new universe shows an aged Bishop scaling a mountain of corpses. The captions make a point of telling us that he wishes that it was raining, so they'd smell less bad.

Age of Apocalypse
X-Men
Age of Apocalypse
X-Men
Age of Apocalypse
The Complete Epic



X-Cutioners Song

An enormous crossover story featuring the villain Stryfe, actually an evil clone of Cable. It involves X's Men, Factor and Force, and is kicked off by what appears to be Cable shooting Professor X. Involving Apocalypse and Mr Sinister, and revelations left, right and centre.

The combined writing talents of Scott Lobdell, Fabian Nicieza and Peter David deliver a complex tale, but also one which left quite the... well, legacy. Stryfe's ultimate revenge was the Legacy Virus, which was a major part of the comics for the next decade.

Is it worth it?

It's actually dated more badly than some of the earlier stories and in a lot of ways, sums up the good and bad of the '90s X-Men. However, it's also a lot of fun, as messy as it is.

Memorable moment

Stryfe's revelation that he's the clone of Cable, and also that either he or Cable is Cyclops's abandoned son, is fantastic.

X-Men
Second Coming
14
Marvel
X-Men
Second Coming
01
Marvel

Second Coming

Cable and the now grown Hope return from the future. Cyclops has established Utopia, an artificially created island, which is a safe haven for mutants. However, these actions have spurred a long-silent enemy into action; Bastion, the leader of mid-nineties event Operation: Zero Tolerance, who has amassed an army of future sentinels.

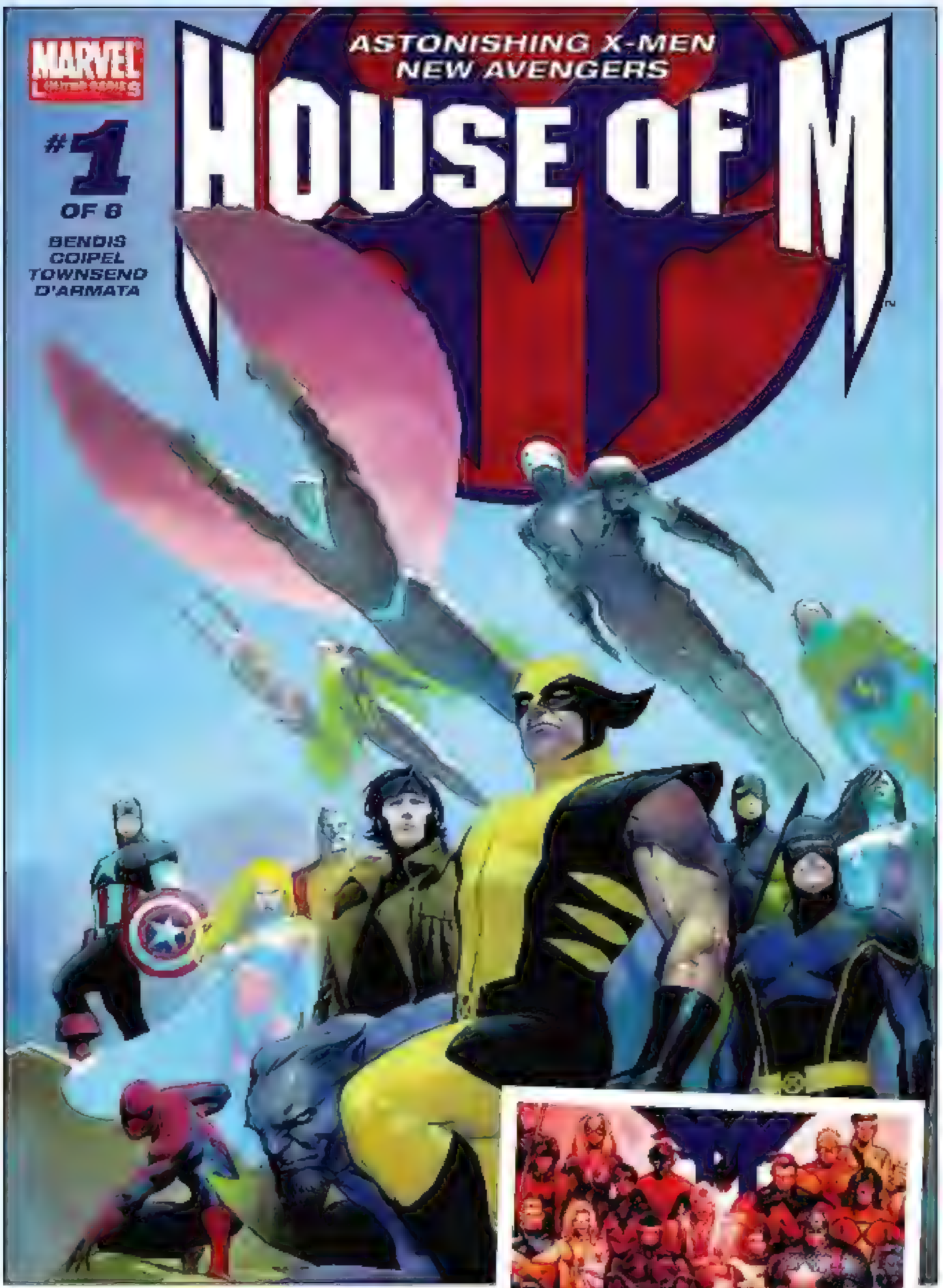
Since the mutants have effectively highlighted where they are, Bastion and his allies do everything they possibly can to eradicate them. However, Hope uses her powers, defeating them (although at the cost of Cable's life). There are hints dropped that Hope may be the reincarnation of Jean Grey, and/or the Phoenix Force.

Is it worth it?

It's decent, although it doesn't work quite as well as *Messiah CompleX* did. Bastion's a fun villain, but the death of Nightcrawler seemed to be a little forced, making the point that this was important.

Memorable moment

After Nightcrawler's funeral, Beast puts the blame squarely on Cyclops's shoulders.



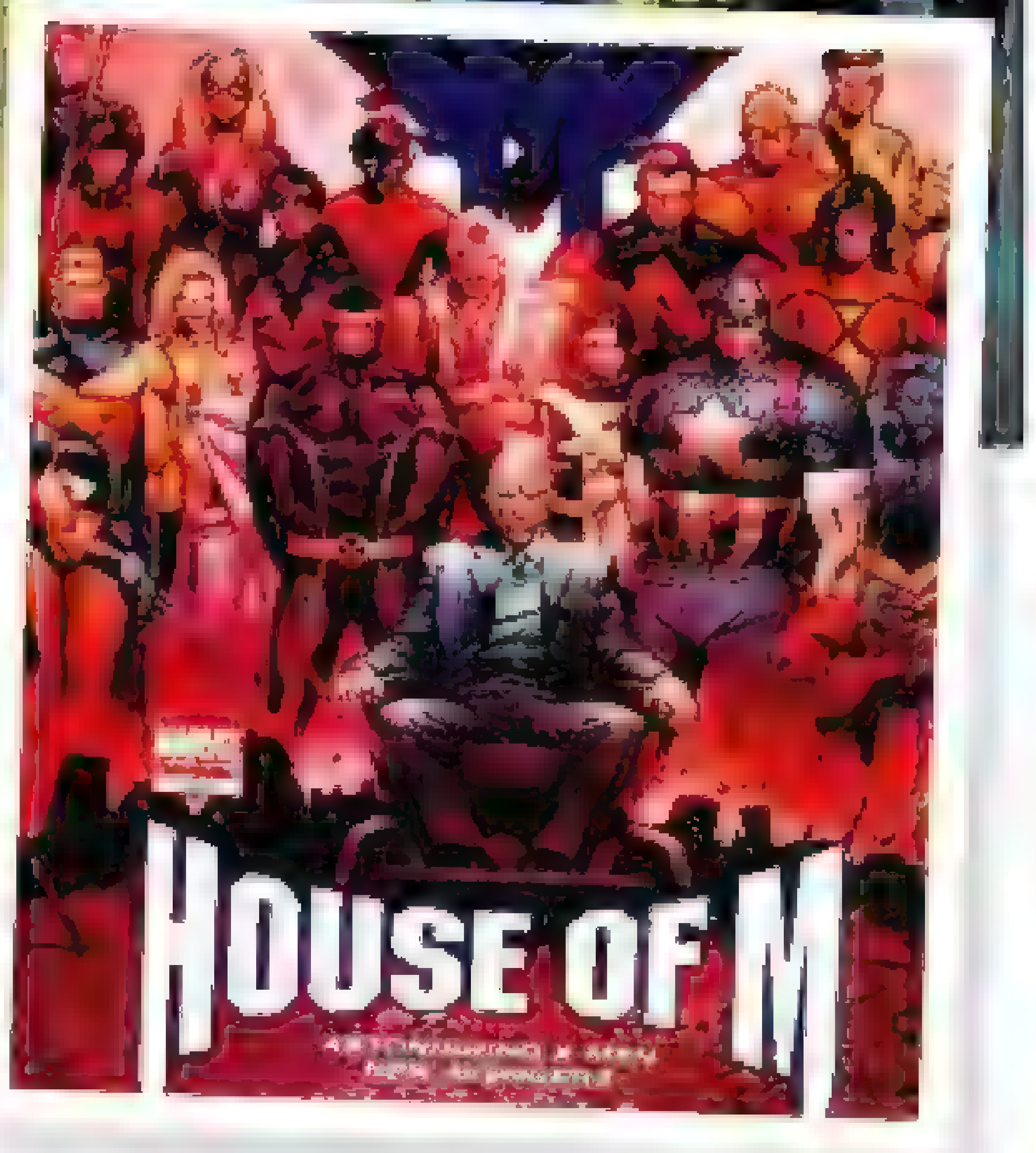
House Of M

This was an X-Men/Avengers crossover, spinning out of the *Disassembled* story summarised in issue 3 of *Comic Heroes*. Magneto's daughter, the Scarlet Witch, uses her reality shifting powers to create a new world where Magneto's vision of human/mutant interaction came true.

In this reality, Magneto is the mutant leader, in a world that's racist towards non-mutants. The rate of mutant births has also increased, leading to mutants being in the majority. Everybody close to the Scarlet Witch has been given the life they wanted. The only person who remembers what the world should be like is Wolverine, and with the help of a young mutant called Layla Miller (who knows things), he goes about setting everything right.

Is it worth it?

It didn't work stunningly well in monthly form, but as a standalone graphic novel, it's a lot better. However, the most important thing is what came immediately after. The Scarlet Witch changed reality again with the words "no more mutants" – none were born since and nine tenths of all live mutants lost their powers.



Memorable moment

In the *House Of M* reality, Peter Parker is a celebrity photographer who's married to Gwen Stacy and whose Uncle Ben is alive and well. When he realises what's happened, he isn't a happy man.

Messiah CompleX

The first new mutant child is born since M-Day, and everybody wants her. The X-Men, Cable, Apocalypse, Mister Sinister, the Purifiers, the Acolytes and others clash in a race to find the new hope of the mutants. Cable gets there first and risks his life to save the child that will, in the future, become the mutant messiah.

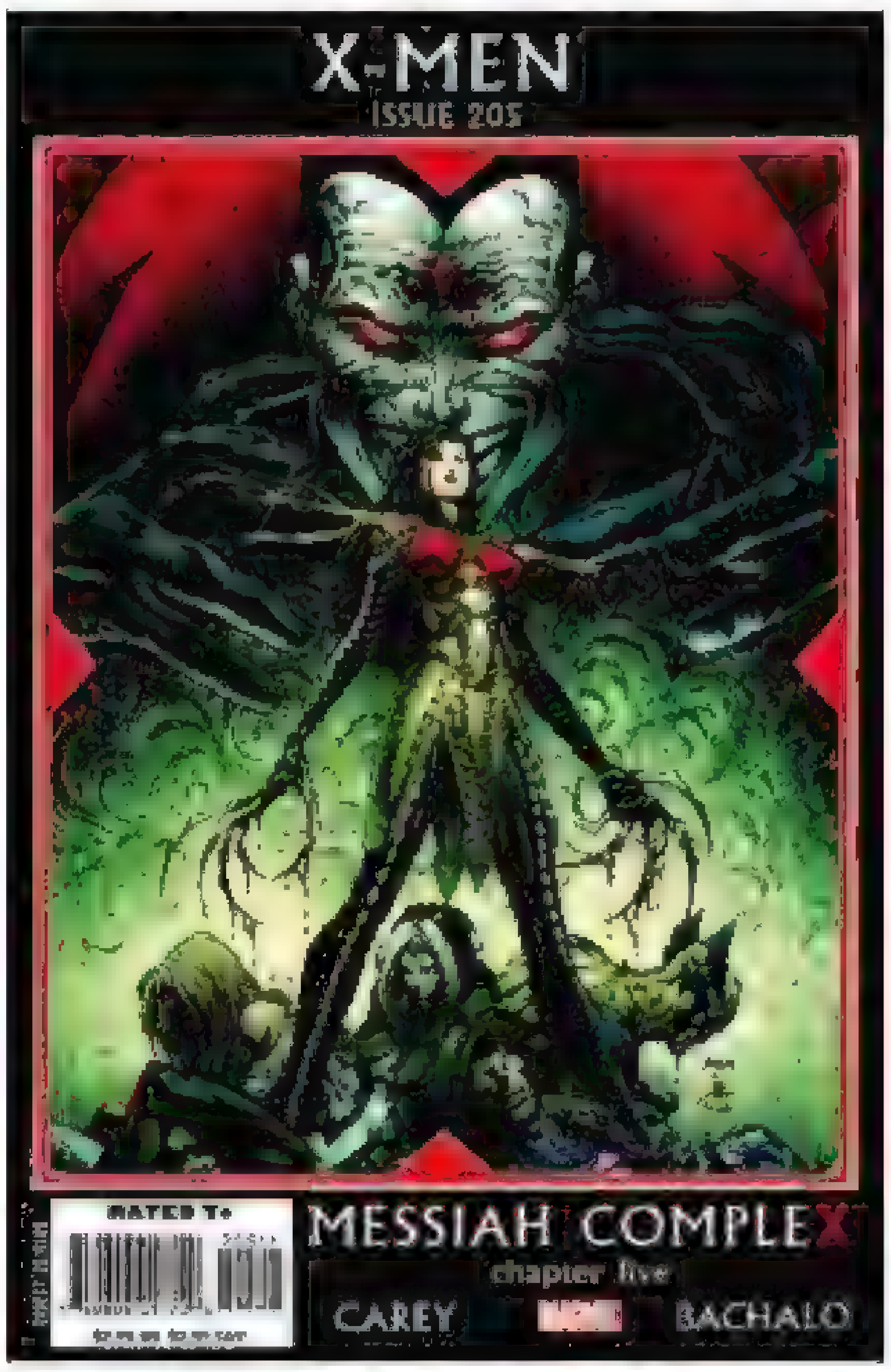
Unfortunately, another time-travelling X-Man, Bishop, is out to kill the child, since she leads to his dystopian future being created. With so many different factions in play, this is a fast moving and violent story, with an ending leading to the current situation, where the X-Men are now completely run by Cyclops.

Is it worth it?

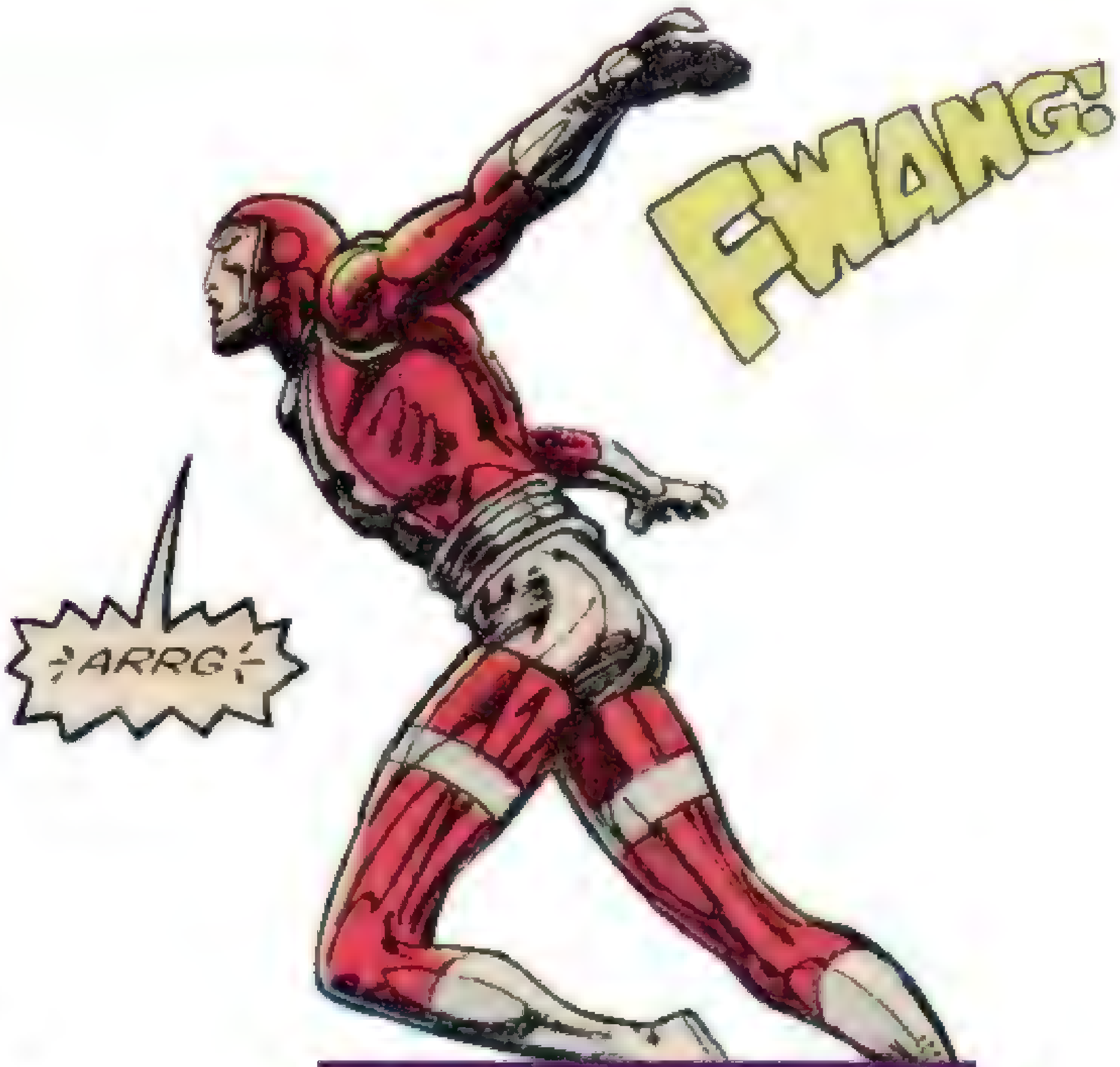
It's actually really good. Well paced, exciting and with a real sense of importance about it, *Messiah CompleX* is one of the best X-Men stories in years.

Memorable moment

Layla Miller and Jamie Madrox spend time in Bishop's future – and get big 'M' tattoos on their faces to mark them as mutants. CH

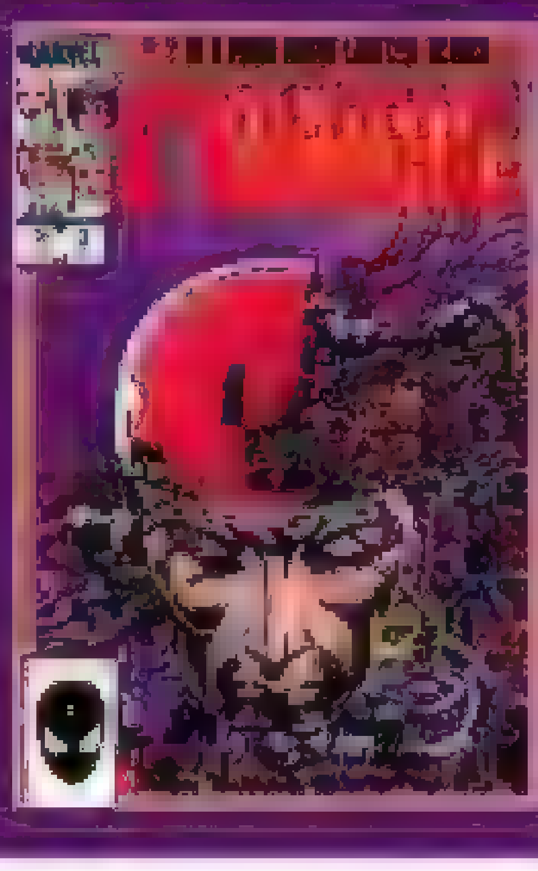


HIDDEN
GEMS



METAL GURU

AT A GLANCE



Book: The four-issue *Machine Man* from 1984.

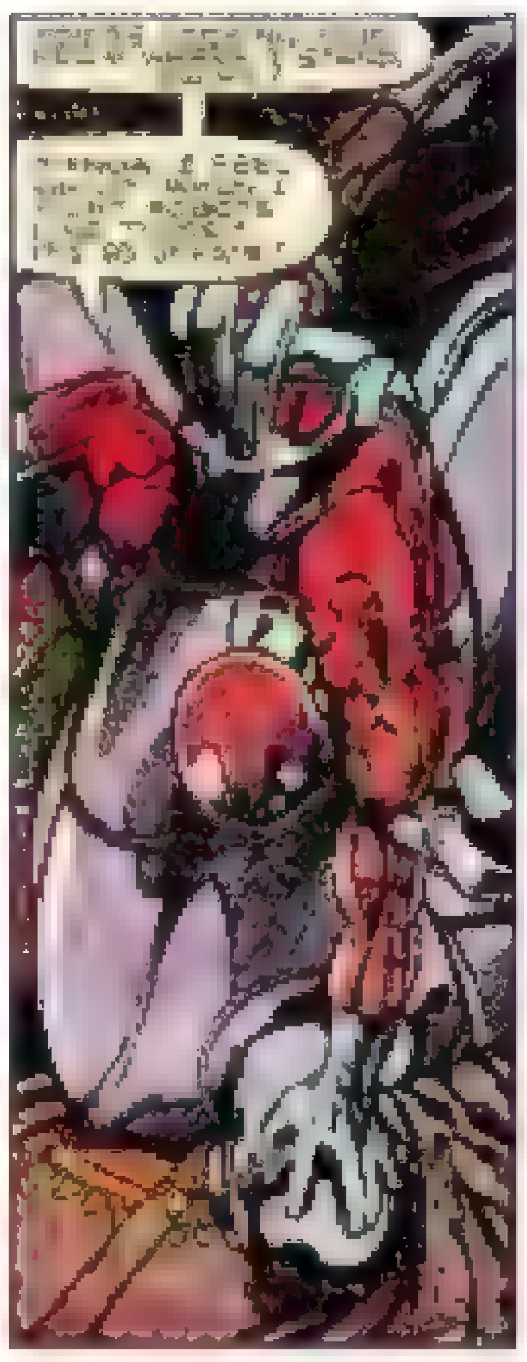
Best bit: The reveal of the Iron Man of 2020.

Why it's great: The wonderful Barry Windsor Smith's mega-detailed, elegant art makes this something of a classic.

Boasting sophisticated art never seen before in superhero books, Machine Man's mid-'80s trip was ahead of its time. By **Matt Bielby**

It's one of those crazy ideas – the bombastic, wildly inventive Jack Kirby being asked to adapt that stately, sophisticated Arthur C Clarke/Stanley Kubrick mind-bender, *2001: A Space Odyssey* into a comic – that was never going to work exactly, but remains fascinating nonetheless. Bouncing around the cosmos like a mad thing for ten issues, Marvel's mid-'70s version of *2001: A Space Odyssey* coughed up one enduring character, a light-hearted superhero robot – a device-with-dreams, like the Vision in *The Avengers,* or *Pinocchio* – initially called Mister Machine, dressed in purple and equipped with stretchy limbs and a Silver Surfer-like desire to fit in.

Renamed Machine Man and soon fully integrated into the Marvel Universe – not least in a charming Steve Ditko-drawn series, circa 1980 – he remained an intriguing visual in need of a real creative spark until 1984, when a four-issue mini-series, put together by such workmanlike creators as Tom De Falco and Herb Trimpe, finally made everything gel. The trump card, the reason it hung together so well, was the art of Barry Windsor-Smith, easing himself back into mainstream comics after a decade-long absence by working over Trimpe's breakdowns. It's his contribution that made the strip sing, and finally gave Machine Man – aka X-51, aka Aaron Stack – his soul.



ABOVE: This Machine Man, trapped in a future he doesn't understand or want, doesn't take any crap. Not from Iron Man, and not from big grey robots either.

RAM 'EM, WRECKERS!

The *Machine Man* mini-series introduces us to a bedraggled, cyberpunk 2020 – much further into the future then, of course, and clearly influenced by such contemporary flicks such as *Blade Runner* and *Tron* – where we find a forgotten Machine Man in bits, the parts discarded by computer error to be found and rebuilt by a ragtag rebel gang of outlaw scavengers and black market 'bot-makers (I know, I know: that they're called things like Brain and Slick doesn't help) named the Midnight Wreckers. With Machine Man rebuilt, they now they have a figurehead to lead their uprising against Baintronics, the dominant – and, naturally, evil – robotics company that's earned its place by copying stolen Machine Man tech.

De Falco, who'd written *Machine Man* for a while back when Ditko was drawing it, perhaps makes too much use of old villains and continuity, so it's no surprise when the Big Bad is revealed to be one Sunset Bain, an evil hottie in mainstream Marvel continuity, but here depicted as an aging industrialist ice queen. She's memorable enough, but making way more of an impact is her hired-in henchman Arno Stark, Tony's moustache-twirling mercenary cousin. Elektra to her Kingpin, Arno makes a nasty near-future take on Iron Man – and has had a minor afterlife in Marvel comics since, showing up occasionally to fight the likes of Death's Head and Spider-Man.

You can't help feeling his memorable visual deserves far more, though: while most successive upgrades of the Iron Man suit take it further away from the classic red-and-gold Kirby/Ditko redesign of 1963, this 'far future' model just makes it cooler instead – and by the simple additions of a gold Doctor Doom-like scowl and giant cogs as shoulder pads. When the second issue's last page first reveals him in all his glory – hilariously not only talking to himself, but actually introducing himself as "the Iron Man of 2020", as if he needs reminding of what year it is – it's one of comics' great entrances, and you can't wait for his fight with Machine Man (a two-part battle that doesn't disappoint).

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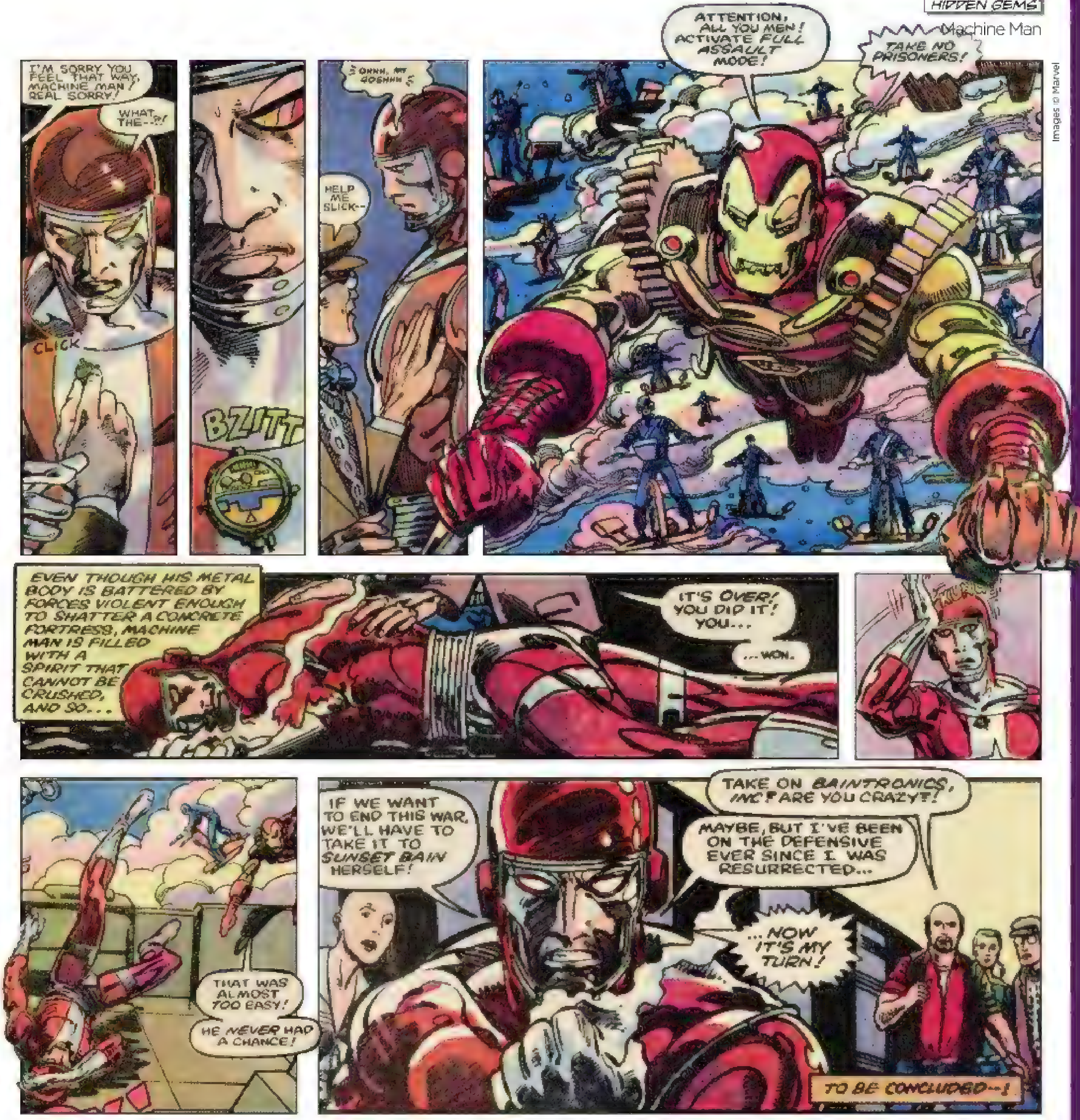
I'M SORRY YOU FEEL THAT WAY, MACHINE MAN! REAL SORRY!
WHAT THE--?!
CLICK
BZITT
OHHH, MY GOSHHH
HELP ME SLICK--
ATTENTION, ALL YOU MEN! ACTIVATE FULL ASSAULT MODE!
TAKE NO PRISONERS!
EVEN THOUGH HIS METAL BODY IS BATTERED BY FORCES VIOLENT ENOUGH TO SHATTER A CONCRETE FORTRESS, MACHINE MAN IS FILLED WITH A SPIRIT THAT CANNOT BE CRUSHED, AND SO...
IT'S OVER! YOU DID IT! YOU...
...WON.
THAT WAS ALMOST TOO EASY!
HE NEVER HAD A CHANCE!
IF WE WANT TO END THIS WAR, WE'LL HAVE TO TAKE IT TO SUNSET BAIN HERSELF!
TAKE ON BAINTRONICS, INC.?! ARE YOU CRAZY?!
MAYBE, BUT I'VE BEEN ON THE DEFENSIVE EVER SINCE I WAS RESURRECTED...
...NOW IT'S MY TURN!
TO BE CONCLUDED--!

Images © Marvel

ABOVE: Arno Stark, the Iron Man of the year 2020, is a right nasty piece of work. He also fought Spider-Man when he travelled back in time to prevent a cataclysmic explosion... which he ended up causing. Paradox!

Ah yes, that talking to yourself thing. Machine Man is one of those odd 'transitional' comics, Windsor-Smith giving it such a slick, sophisticated modern look that it throws De Falco's old-school script into stark relief. Frank Miller and Alan Moore were changing comic book storytelling at great speed in the early '80s, but some were slower to catch on than others, and Machine Man remains packed with clunky conventions – it's full of characters gabbing on, reminding each other about who they are each issue – and charmingly useless 'cool' future slang ("Have you gone zonkers?" someone asks. "You really zigged those Bainy-bots!"). Technology is all over the shop too – Windsor-Smith's layered, hyper-detailed art shows each wire and gear, circuitry every bit as elaborate as anything in his *Conan's Hyborian Age* – but then some idiot takes you right out of the moment by saying something as thunking and old-fashioned as, "I just scanned those tapes you telescreened me." It's equally hilarious when they take the subway and everyone needs exactly $14.37 in change.

LASTING IMPACT

In other ways the strip is both ahead of and behind the times: it was a smart decision to let Windsor-Smith colour himself, using more muted tones than most would have at the time, but it's just a shame the printing process couldn't keep up, with many panels coming across as cluttered. Windsor-Smith would get better at this, and his 'Lifedeath' *X-Men* issues or *Weapon X* series are far more sophisticated. Still, *Machine Man* came first, and earns its place in history through the simple fact that we'd rarely seen such aloof, elegant art on a superhero story before. Sure, it's not the finished article, but because it made us want more it's a genuine landmark series nonetheless. CH

■ These issues were reprinted as two issues of *Machine Man 2020*, then as a trade paperback collection; a deluxe version is surely overdue.

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RICH JOHNSTON

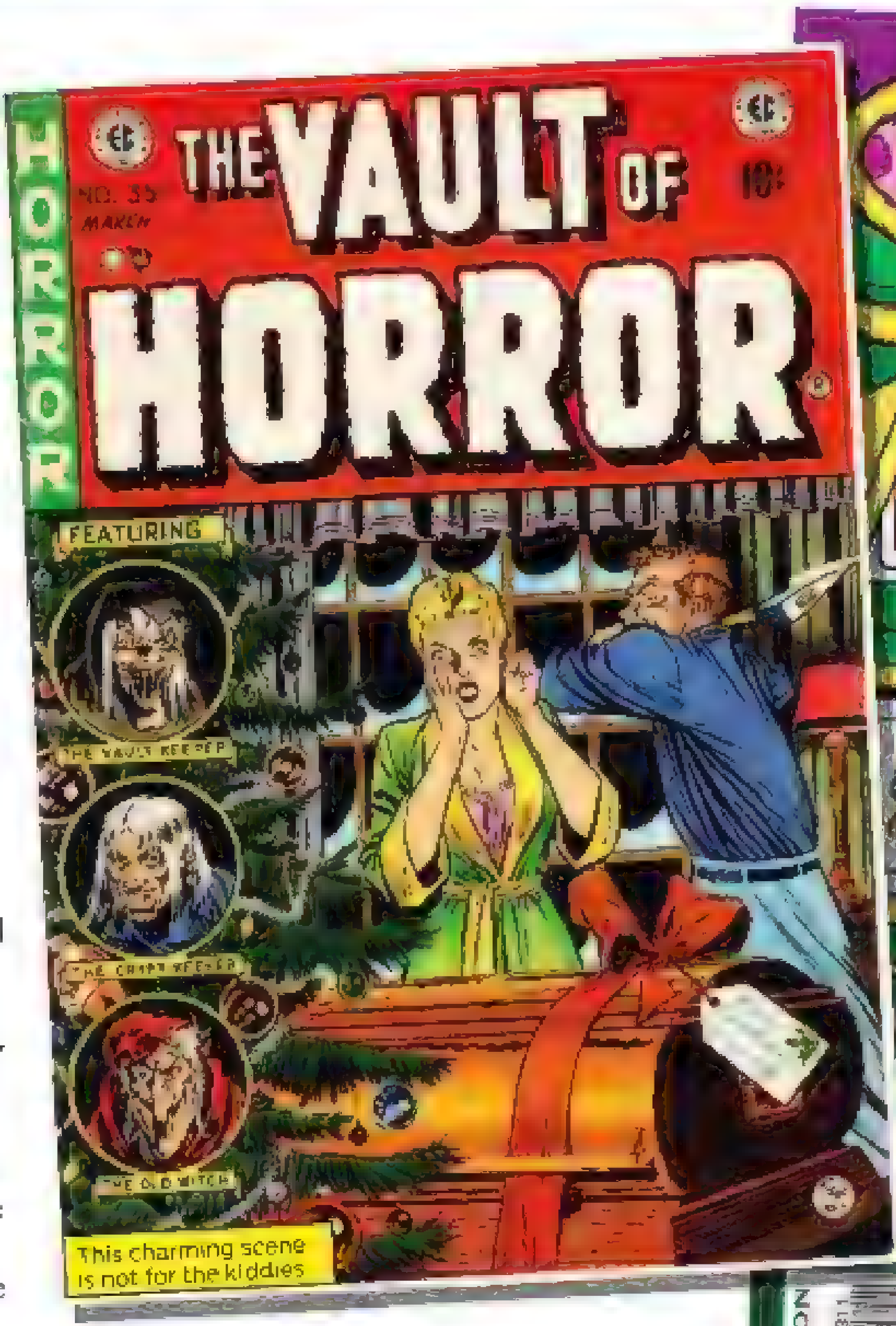
CODE BREAKER

One-man comics rumour mill **Rich Johnston** casts his beady eye over the notorious Comics Code...

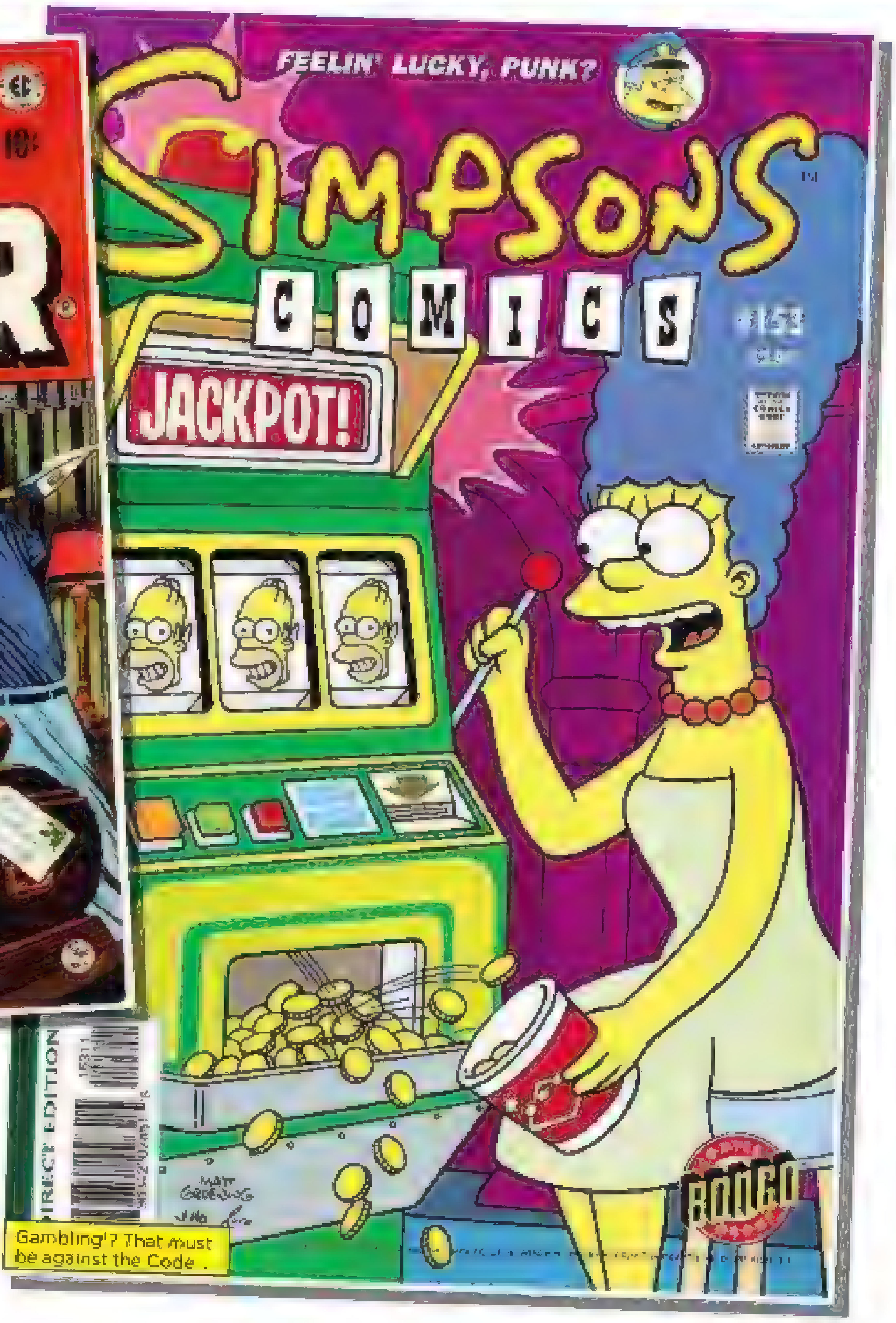
The Comics Code was a very peculiar invention of the 1950s. A little bit like the pacemaker, superglue and oral contraception.

It was ostensibly created by comic book publishers as a response to the congressional hearings on the suitability of comic books for children. As a badge on the cover, its presence would ensure parental peace of mind that little Tommy wouldn't be confronted with bloody zombie heads, corrupt politicians or gay people.

In reality, it was designed by a cartel of publishers to put competitor – and oft-offender against decency – EC Comics out of business. It had a series of guidelines so ludicrous that EC wouldn't have been able to publish its comics, including forbidding the use of the words 'CRIME', 'HORROR' or 'TERROR' in the title – basically EC's entire line. Without that Code stamp, magazine distributors would refuse to sell the comics. Just imagine if DC or Marvel had been banned from using the word 'MAN'...



This charming scene is not for the kiddies



Gambling!? That must be against the Code.

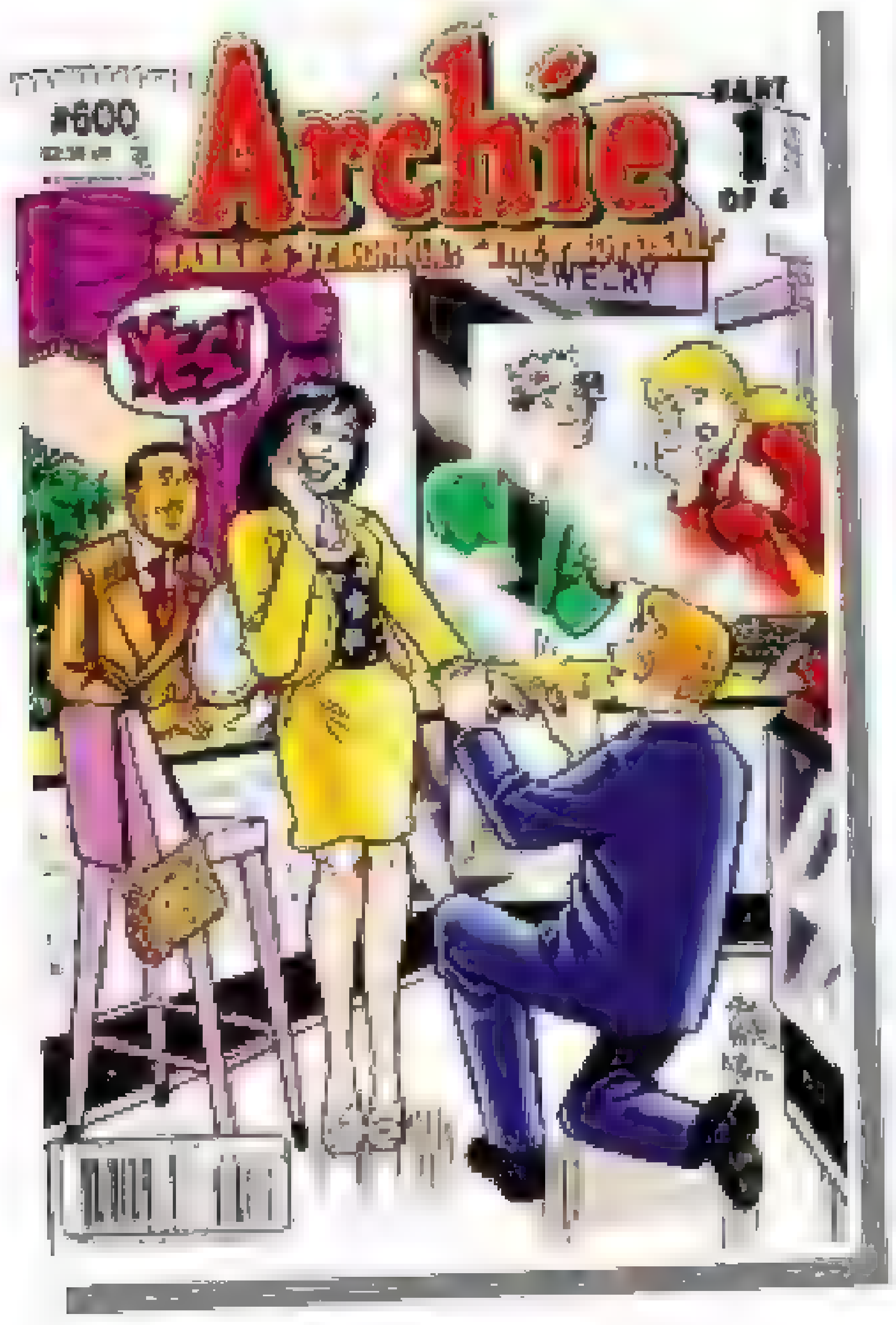
But the other, less well-known, aim was to placate advertisers, because no client liked the idea of its advert for Sea-Monkeys appearing in a publication blamed for corrupting our youth. Well, not in the '50s anyway. And that principle stood for decades – advertising agencies relied on the code to ensure the books were morally suitable to sell their air rifles, pyramid schemes and X-Ray Spex for peeping toms. And while the Code wouldn't allow a comic to show a couple in bed together, it did permit, as *X-Men* famously showed, characters to use the 'n'-word. It was a very odd beast indeed.

The alternative and direct comics markets provided a way for non-Code books to reach their audience, and even Image found it could sell on newsstands without that magic stamp. But the Code muddled along until 2001, when Marvel – looking to save money in every way and get up the nose of DC Comics in the process – used ex-DC employees to announce that Marvel was instilling its own code. And it didn't affect sales or advertising one bit.

Kids' publishers Bongo and Archie Comics sell their advertising through DC Comics' advertising department. I understand that Bongo withdrew from the Comics Code last year and discovered that there was no difference in the amount spent on advertising in its titles. This seems to have been a strong motivating force for DC and Archie's subsequent decision to drop the Code as well. Why pay for something that you don't actually need?

And so the market is now left with a bewildering array of code descriptions: E, All Ages, A, AA, T, T+, PA and M: It's so confusing that no parent has any idea which comic is suitable for which person any more, and they have to resort to actually reading them.

What if they like what they read? We all know that comics can corrupt kids – but what effect are they having on the parents?



"THE COMICS CODE HAD A SERIES OF GUIDELINES SO LUDICROUS THAT EC WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN ABLE TO PUBLISH ITS COMICS"

■ Rich Johnston runs comics news and rumour site bleedingcool.com.

REMEMBER THE WORDS OF TORQUEMADA :- " SLEEP IS NO REFUGE FOR IMPURE THOUGHTS ! "

THE WORLD ACCORDING TO KEVIN

2000 AD, *Nemesis*, *Metalzoic* and *Batman*... Kevin O'Neill talks about them all – and more! By **Jes Bickham**

Last issue we interviewed Kevin O'Neill about the forthcoming *League Of Extraordinary Gentlemen: Century 1969*. But the artist, who's also known for co-creating *Nemesis The Warlock* and *Marshal Law*, talked to us at length about other parts of his career, too, which we're proud to present here. Behold the word of Kevin!

ON HIS EARLY DAYS

When I started in comics, when I was 16, back in 1970, almost the first thing I noticed when I was an office boy on *Buster*, walking around the different departments, was how incredibly old fashioned it was, even then. It was a great period to see and I was glad to see it – it was the end of an era, the end of the old Fleet Street days of heavy boozing and heavy misogynism! It was like living in an episode of *The Sweeney*.

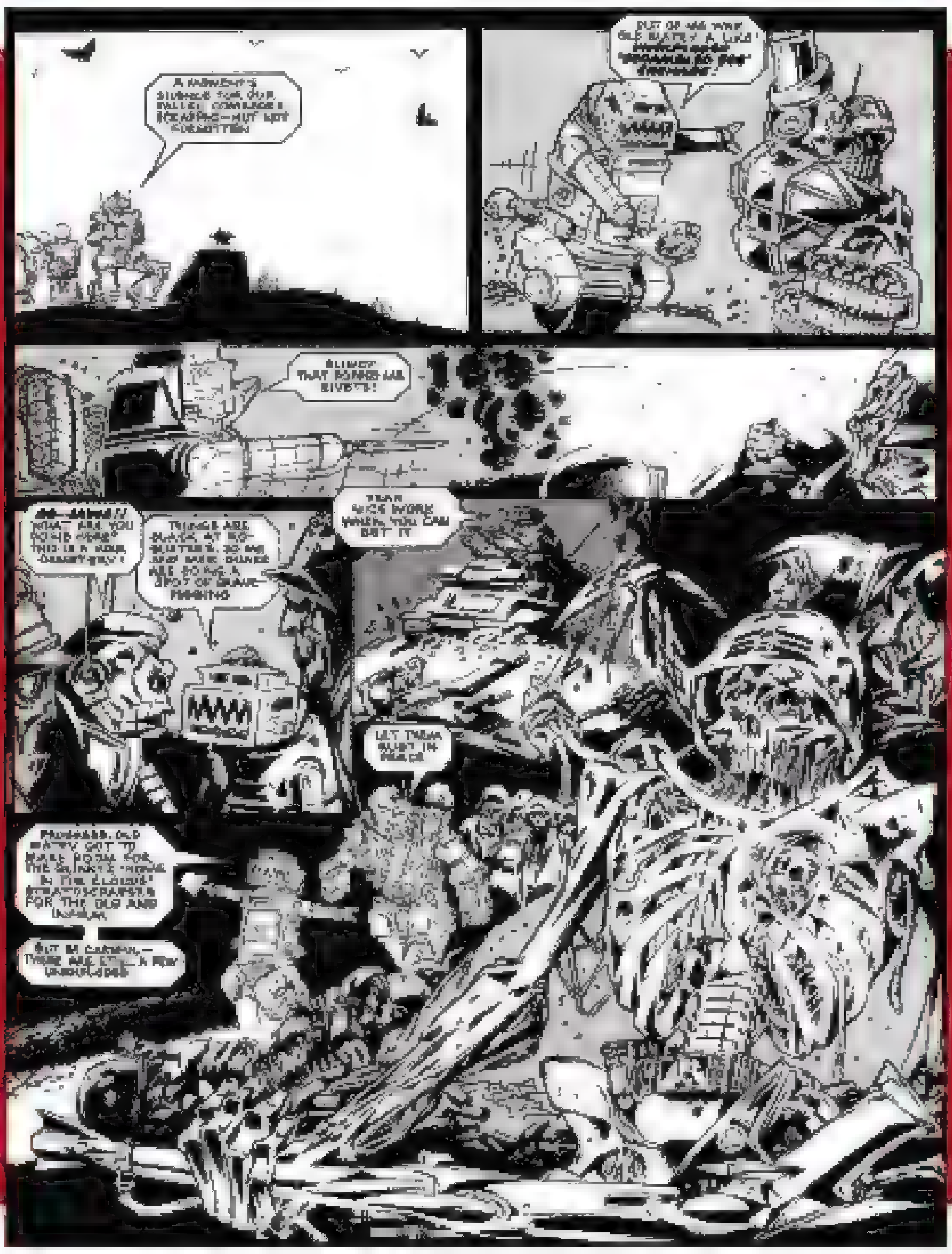
But the younger guys – and I was a kid, really – such as Steve Moore and Steve Parkhouse were there, and it was Steve Moore who first threw me underground comics. So that was where I first saw Robert Crumb's work and S Clay Wilson, all this incredible stuff. Richard Corben was straddling the underground and the mainstream, and it was fascinating. It was an incredibly different way of doing comics.

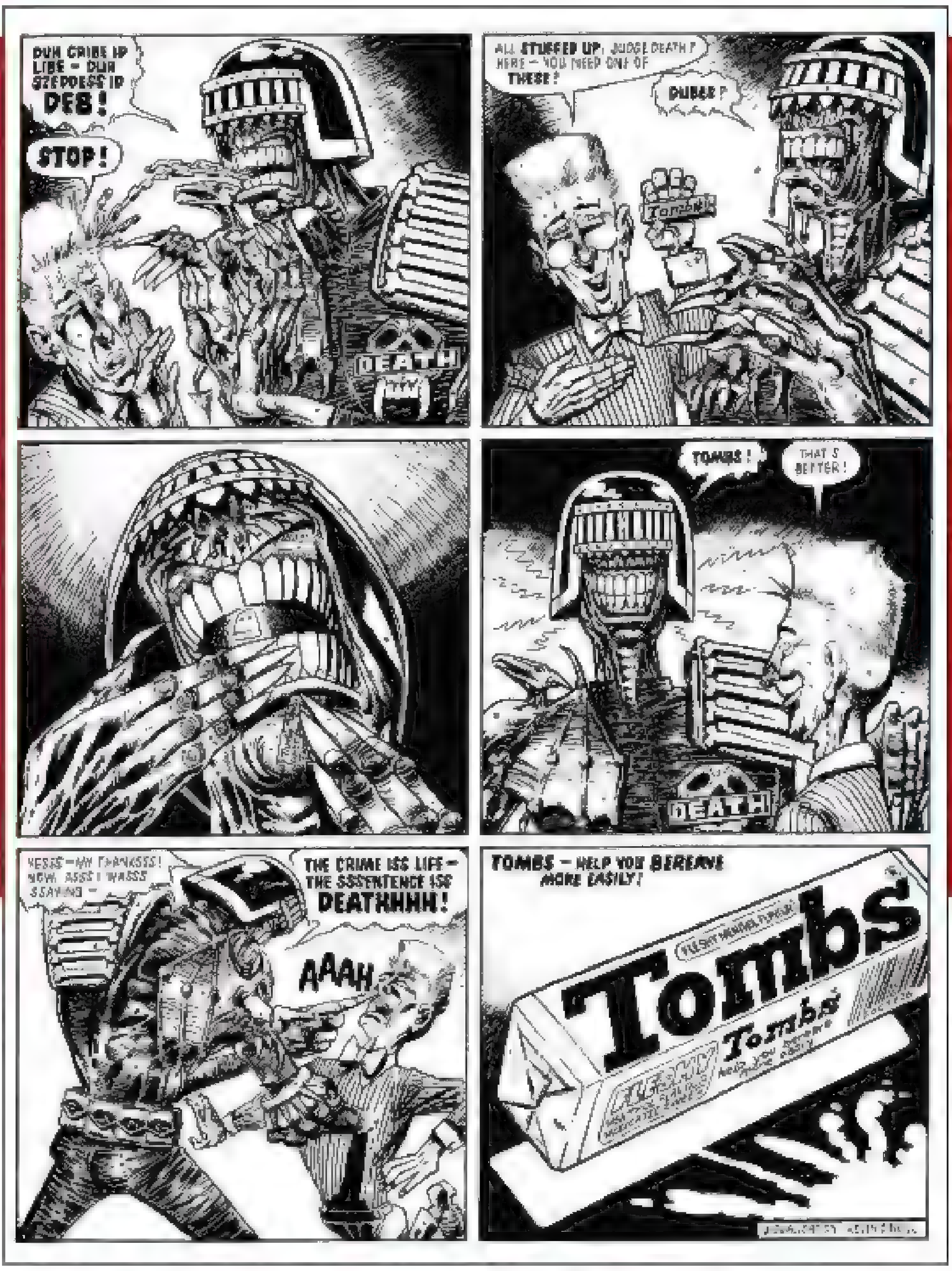
I'd been following Marvel since I was a kid and Steranko's stuff was full of life – there was a lot of stuff outside of Britain. It felt like everything was happening somewhere else – and likewise, the European thing, with people like Sergio Toppi and Moebius, was trickling in. It was hard to get hold of, but you'd occasionally see it.

Some of those artists did of course work in Britain – Hugo Pratt worked for Fleetway years before I got there – but the point is I knew there was a different way of doing things and it didn't have to be this chessboard-like black-and-white comic... Robot Archie, you know? It really felt like all this stuff had reached the end of its days and that they didn't know what to do with this fairly large industry they'd created. And I think it was probably the same at DC Thomson, where they had the *Beano* and the *Dandy*. They weren't at their best, shall we say!

I was a big comics fan. I loved Ken Reid's work and Leo Baxendale, those humour artists and creators. The other fascinating thing is that those guys were still around, but they were hemmed in and slightly cut off at the knees with what they could do. They'd had their heyday on the *Beano* and *Dandy* and the Odhams comics, which were the last great blast of humour comics, and suddenly they were at IPC and might have been paid a little bit better, but they were chained, really, to a certain way of doing things and it was frustrating to see that.

These hugely talented guys were still doing good work, admittedly, but unfettered there were all sorts of things they could have done. They were just working for the sausage factory, processing comics like *Whizzer And Chips*. It's no secret, I'd learned to »

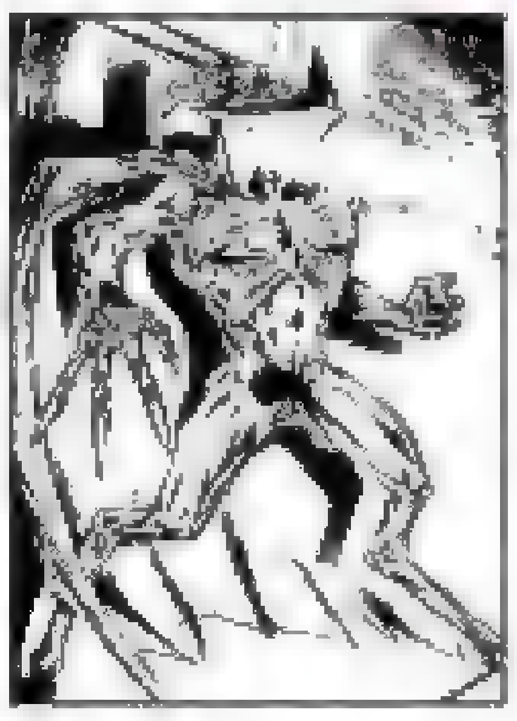

YEAH NICE WORK WHEN YOU CAN GET IT

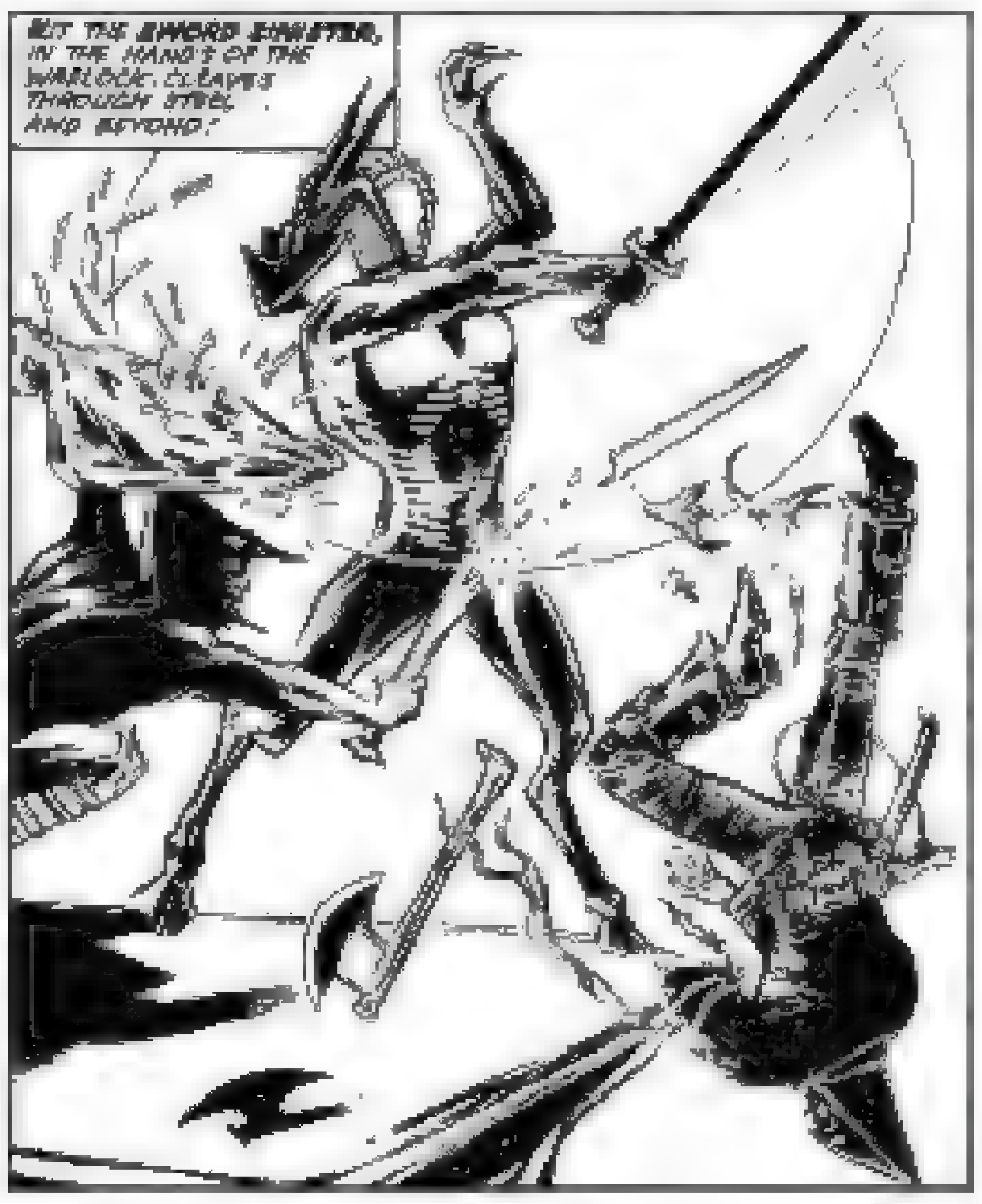

DUH CRIBE IS LIBE – DUH SZEDDESS IS DEB!
STOP!
DEATH
ALL STUFFED UP, JUDGE DEATH? HERE – YOU NEED ONE OF THESE?
DUBES?
Tombs
TOMBS!
THAT'S BETTER!
DEATH
YESSS – MY THANKSSS! NOW, ASS I WASS SSAYING –
THE CRIME ISS LIFE – THE SSSENTENCE ISS DEATHHHH!
AAAH
TOMBS – HELP YOU BEREAVE MORE EASILY!
Tombs
Tombs

loathe those humour comics, with the terrible puns and all. It was pretty bad.

So the fun in those offices was seeing all the underground stuff. And EC Comics! I'd never seen them before – I'd seen MAD, and I knew they did horror comics, but I'd never seen them. So it was an incredible education of world comic history, just going in and out of the doors there. But it did make you look around and think, 'Why am I doing this *Billy Bunter* strip?' There was a whole world out there and it was changing, and wasn't represented there, until people like Pat Mills and John Wagner came along and *2000 AD* arrived and things did change.

I've jumped ahead of myself here, but that was the atmosphere I started in. It felt like the '50s, but it was the '70s!




BUT THE SWORD SINISTER, IN THE HANDS OF THE WARLOCK, CLEAVES THROUGH STEEL AND BEYOND!

ABOVE RIGHT: That satirical *2000 AD* spirit in full effect

ABOVE: Classic *Nemesis The Warlock*.

LEFT: Torquemada's Terminators receive a thrashing.

ON THE LAUNCH OF 2000 AD

The whole 'punk spirit' idea of *2000 AD* is coincidental and not really true, and it's become embedded in myth about *2000 AD*, really... like the one about *Star Wars* creating *2000 AD*. It hadn't happened when we came out! It was being filmed while we were putting *2000 AD* together. I tell people that what was being released when *2000 AD* first went to press was Harlan Ellison's *A Boy And His Dog* and *Damnation Alley*, plus I think probably *Logan's Run*... I seem to remember that it felt like old Hollywood science fiction in *Logan's Run*, and then when *2000 AD* came out *Star Wars* was released.

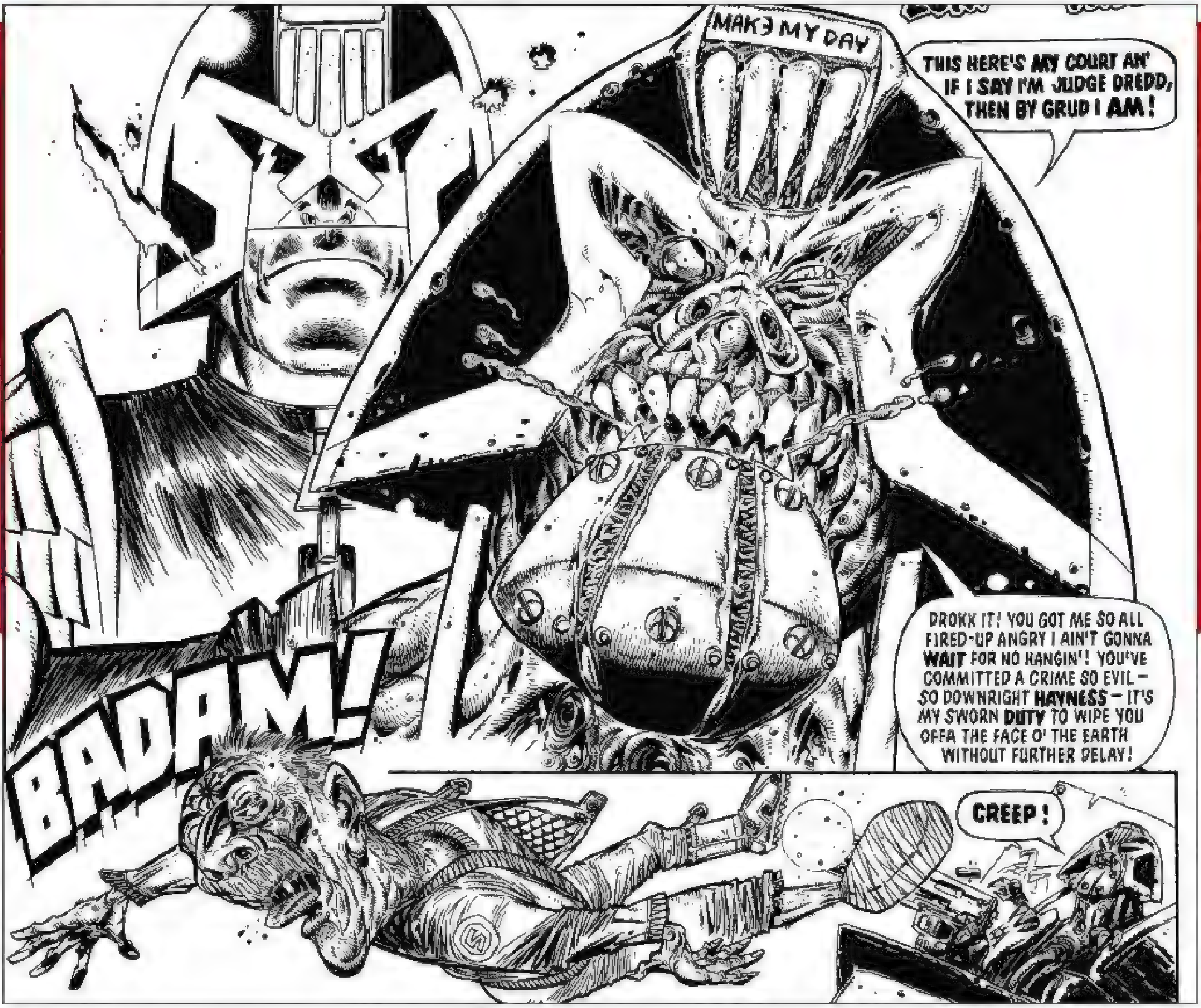
I did special effects fanzines back in those days, and I went around interviewing Ray Harryhausen and people who worked on *Star Wars*, people like John Stears, and there was an inkling that something different was happening with that film. You never trusted production art in those days – it always looked fantastic but the films never delivered on those paintings. But *Star Wars* did deliver on Ralph McQuarrie's paintings – they put his work right up there on screen!

The punk thing happened kind of simultaneously as well. So there was a weird kind of eruption in Britain of an offstage SF boom, plus the punk atmosphere and the way society was back then – slightly falling apart, with garbage piling up on the streets and student protests... There was a lot of stuff going on.

We were pretty much left alone on *2000 AD* until *Action* got taken off the stands, then – and this turned out to be a great thing – the censors came down heavily on *2000 AD*, so we were pasting heads back on bodies in *M.A.C.H. 1*. *M.A.C.H. 1* was incredibly violent before it got altered! But what this did was switch the emphasis from ultraviolence – which was pretty much how the comic was and would have been – to a sly, black humour. I think that was the making of *2000 AD* and by the time we got to *Nemesis* we were running with it.

It got pretty outrageous at times. The stuff I got occasionally censored on was by no means the weirdest stuff in there! The management knew there was something 'wrong' with the strip, that they didn't like it, but they didn't know why. So they'd ask me to change a

> "THE STUFF I GOT OCCASIONALLY CENSORED ON WAS BY NO MEANS THE WEIRDEST STUFF IN THERE!"


MAKE MY DAY
THIS HERE'S MY COURT AN' IF I SAY I'M JUDGE DREDD, THEN BY GRUD I AM!
DROKK IT! YOU GOT ME SO ALL FIRED-UP ANGRY I AIN'T GONNA WAIT FOR NO HANGIN'! YOU'VE COMMITTED A CRIME SO EVIL – SO DOWNRIGHT HAYNESS – IT'S MY SWORN DUTY TO WIPE YOU OFFA THE FACE O' THE EARTH WITHOUT FURTHER DELAY!
BADAM!
CREEP!

ABOVE: The stuff a generation of Brit-comic childhoods were made of

bit of bridge because it was phallic and completely miss Torquemada's underage wife! Or Nemesis galloping around on the back of his wife, which is possibly the strangest image I've ever drawn. But that all got by and no-one batted an eyelid!

Perhaps the most fun I've ever had with Pat [Mills] was laughing our heads off doing *Nemesis* episodes – we just really, really enjoyed it.

ON THE WAY THINGS WERE

Everybody was poor back then. Comics didn't pay well and there were no reprint fees or anything, and there was a lot of discontent over that. There was a lot of work going into *2000 AD* and if you went with your Oliver Twist bowl asking for more they'd say things like, 'If we paid for illustration royalties, it'd put everyone in the company out of work.' And that was with a massive circulation! Cut to years later and they did do it, with a much tinier circulation.

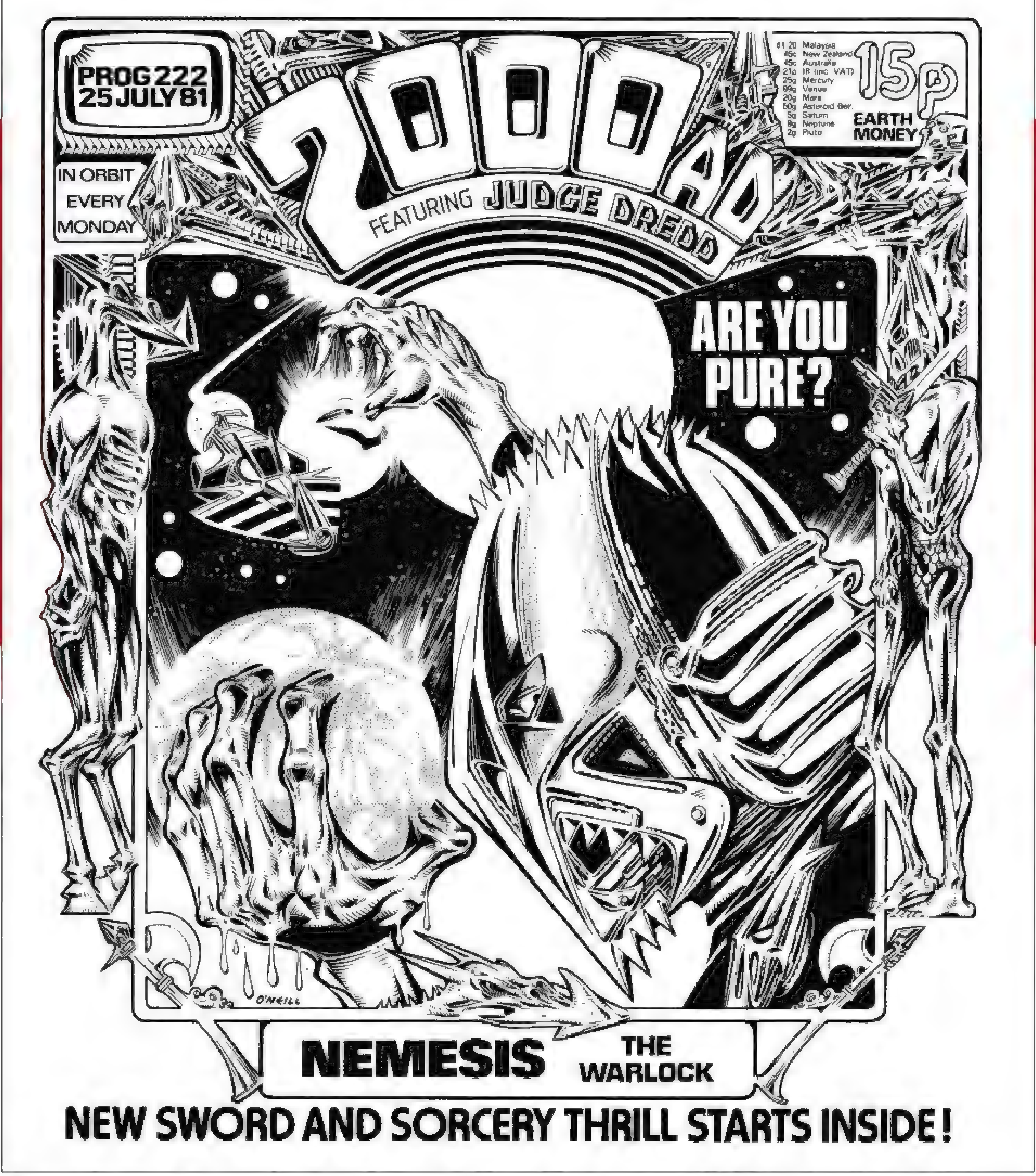
It was the way publishing worked in those days – creators could be seen and not heard. It was that mindset of the interchangeability of people, that an imitator could come in for less money, do an approximation of your work and the readers wouldn't notice.

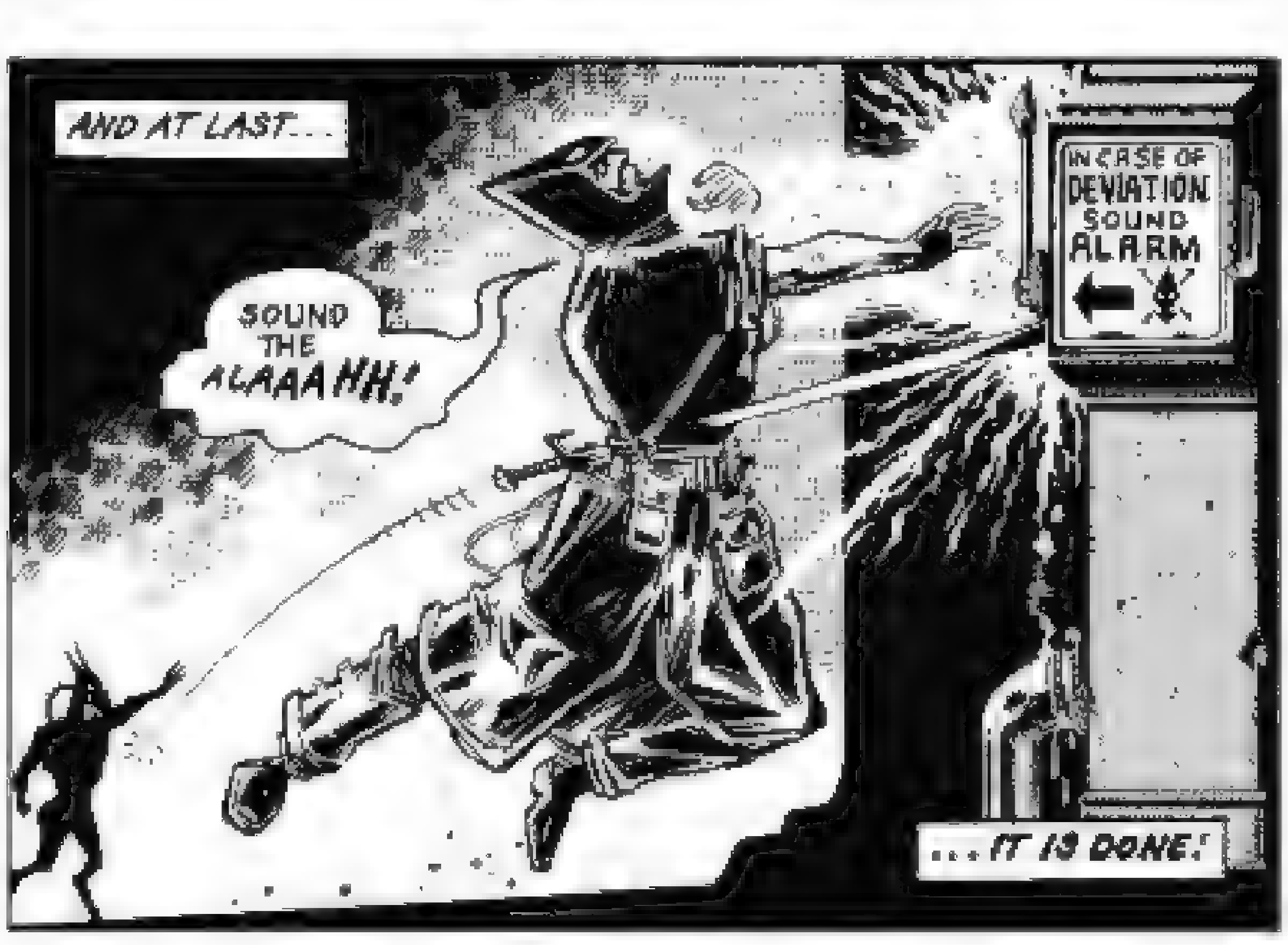
What Pat did, brilliantly, was go for people with eccentric styles, such as me. You know, we'd have different artists every week on *Dredd* but as long as it was good he wouldn't care. The 'house style' thing had already killed British comics to a large extent and it was getting pretty bloody awful – that institutionalised 'this is the way we do things' mindset. It felt like your dad's comics. Like your dad dancing! Not something you wanted to see.

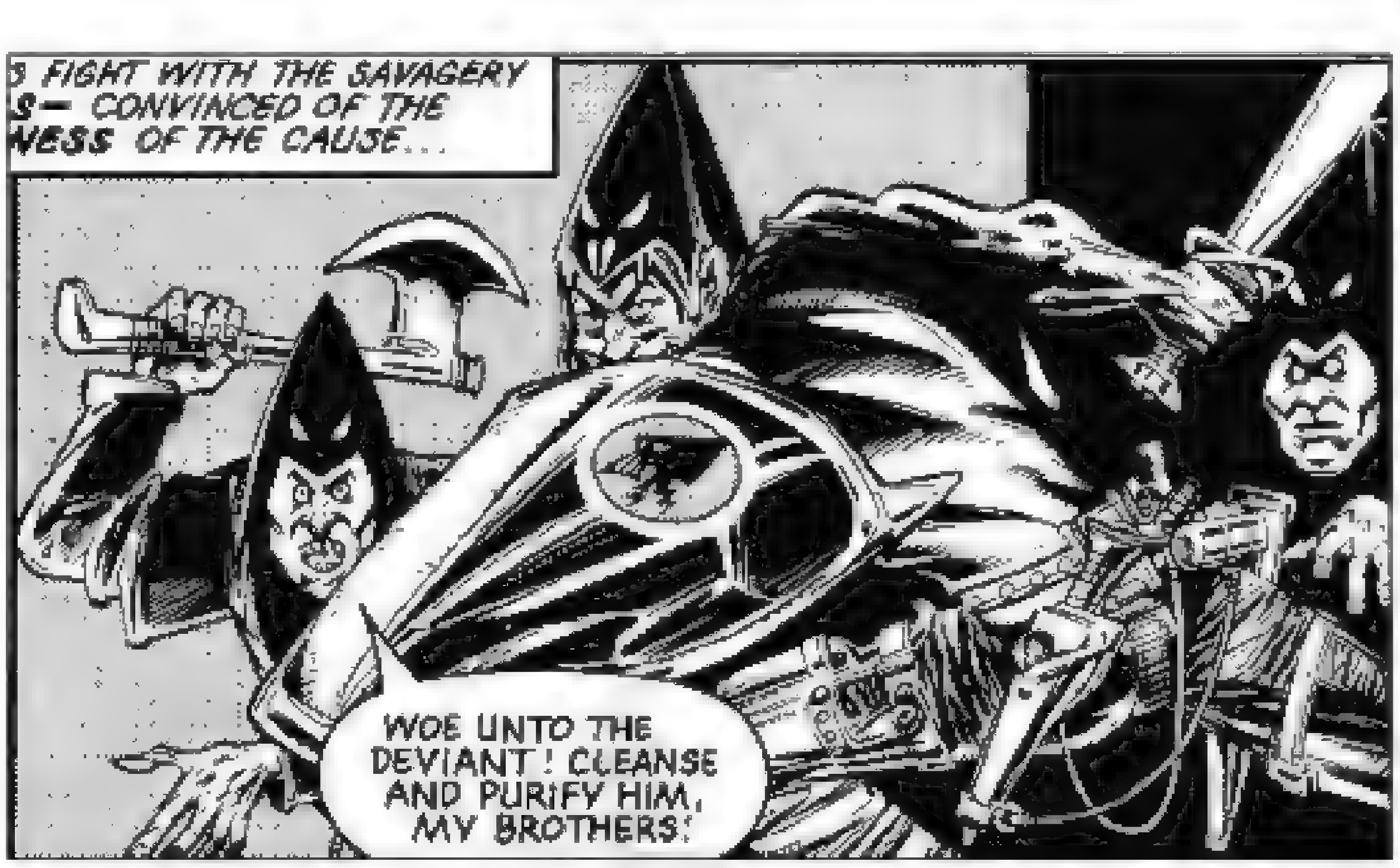
ON 2000 AD'S INFLUENCE

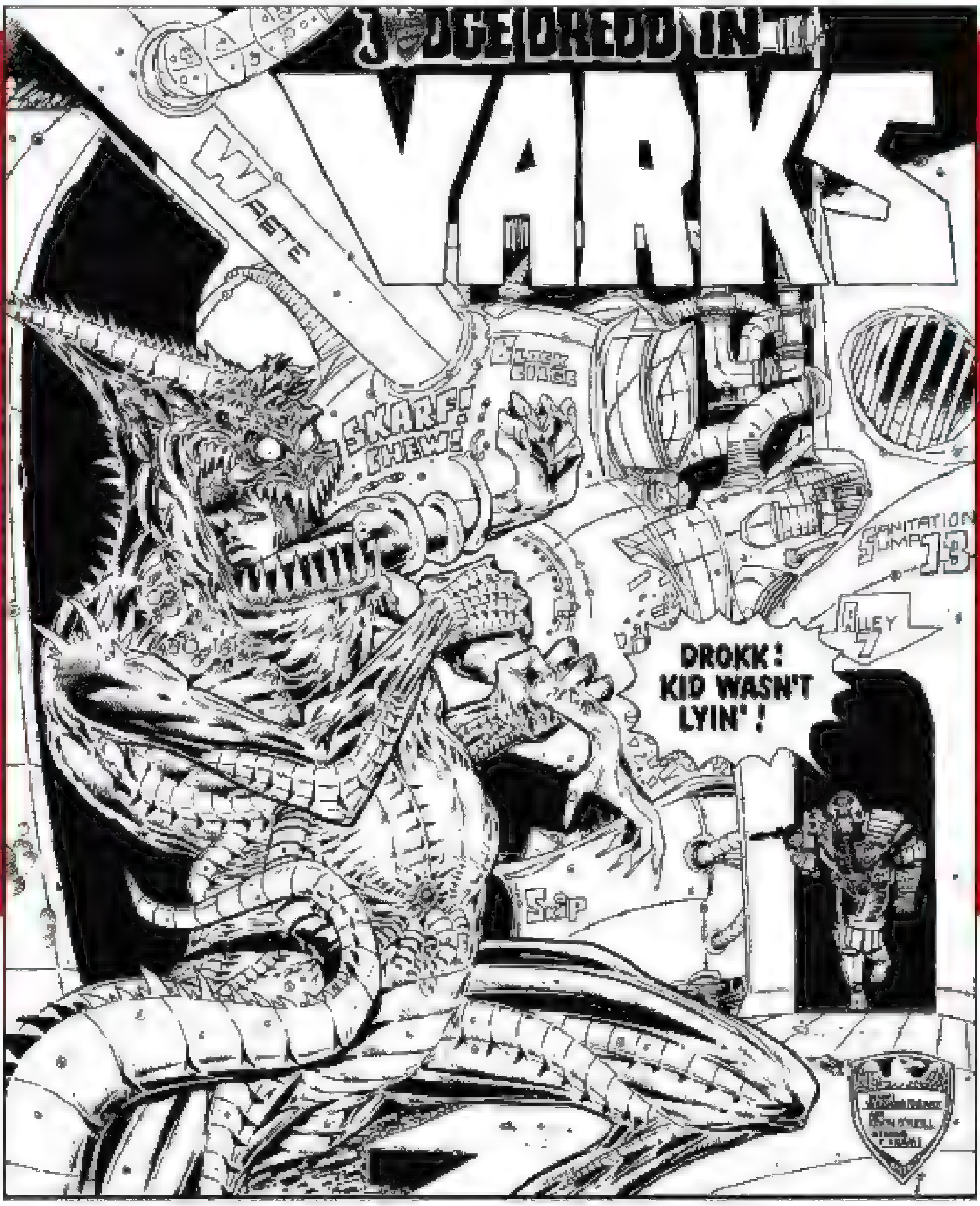
I think the longevity of *2000 AD* is very satisfying. The comic is like the last man standing, the last flagship of British comics, so it's very gratifying. The thing is, when we were doing *2000 AD* back in the early days, before Pat left, it was just going to be the flagship of a whole line of different comics, as we wanted to do a historical weekly comic too, with a level of attention to detail and just doing it a different way. Pat talked quite a bit about doing a humour comic, and using the people he really liked, but it never came to be. The management couldn't really do a deal with Pat and when Pat had gone they'd do a *2000 AD* knock-off like *Starlord* and would retreat into more old-fashioned things. So it only changed things for *2000 AD*, really! But, you know, I'd get people writing to me saying they'd like to draw comics and asking what pens I'd use, and over the years some of those guys got into the business. So I think a lot of people got turned on to British comics by *2000 AD* and that was a direct line to DC or Marvel – and, of course, DC came over headhunting in the early '80s, and that's when they got Brian Bolland and Dave Gibbons and the rest. So a few of us started to segue into America.

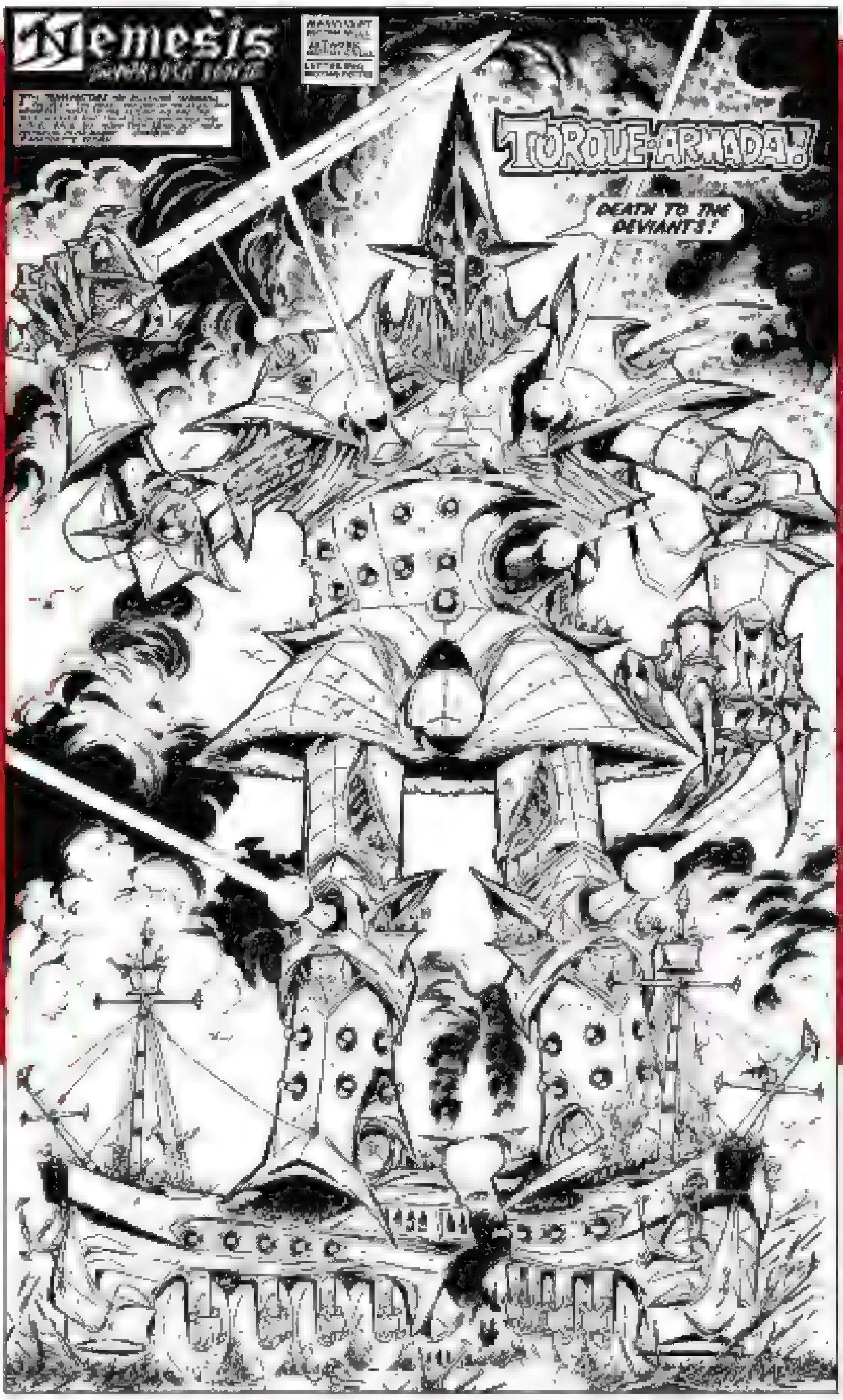
So I guess it did have a much bigger affect than just being a weekly, cheaply printed comic! The other thing is that we were under constant pressure from management to aim it at 12-year-olds. That was their market. From very early on we had older readers, but the management just did not want the


PROG 222
25 JULY 81
IN ORBIT
EVERY
MONDAY
2000 AD
FEATURING JUDGE DREDD
$1.20 Malaysia
45c New Zealand
45c Australia
21p IR (inc. VAT)
25g Mercury
99g Venus
20g Mars
60g Asteroid Belt
5g Saturn
8g Neptune
2g Pluto
15p
EARTH
MONEY
ARE YOU PURE?
O'NEILL
NEMESIS THE WARLOCK
NEW SWORD AND SORCERY THRILL STARTS INSIDE!


AND AT LAST...
SOUND THE ALAAAHH!
IN CASE OF DEVIATION SOUND ALARM
...IT IS DONE!


S FIGHT WITH THE SAVAGERY
S— CONVINCED OF THE
NESS OF THE CAUSE...
WOE UNTO THE DEVIANT! CLEANSE AND PURIFY HIM, MY BROTHERS!




Nemesis
TORQUE-ARMADA!
DEATH TO THE DEVIANTS!

LEFT: Torquemada's propaganda. Be Pure! Be Vigilant! Behave!

ABOVE LEFT: Mega City One in all its insane glory.

ABOVE RIGHT: O'Neill's baroque art was a perfect fit for *Nemesis The Warlock*.

patronage or the indeed the money from older readers, because they didn't trust that market!

ON METALZOIC

Originally *Metalzoic* would have been in *2000 AD* – and it ended up being reprinted in *2000 AD* – and Pat [Mills] sent me a script outline for it. His then-wife had said to him, 'You really shouldn't give this to them. It's better than that, get first rights,' and we were going to do it for a magazine Kelvin Gosnell started called *Look Alive*, but that didn't last long enough. We were going to do it as a colour back-page serial, but that fell apart, and by then the DC connection had been created and they were looking for material for the beginning of their graphic novel period.

So we did it for them but it was a bit of an unhappy experience. Our way of working, from a rough outline, was to make it up as we went along. If a character interested us, we'd veer off in another direction. That's how *Nemesis The Warlock* started – we'd follow all kinds of tributaries of interesting fiction. Things just don't work out that way if you have a conference call with people and lock it down and it has to run for X amount of pages.

We were told that we had to come up with a rigid synopsis and tell the story in a certain amount of pages and so on. It just wasn't how we were used to working. *Metalzoic*'s never been reprinted. It's kind of fallen off the radar and DC doesn't seem to have the appetite to revive it.

ON BATMAN

One of the driving forces for becoming a comic artist was the sheer thrill of drawing Batman. When I was a kid, the Batman period was really the worst of Batman – a kind of science fiction thing, the Bat-Mite era. But the 80-page giants, the reprints of the earlier stuff, were fascinating to me. They were a bit darker, a bit more gothic. There was the great newspaper strip version that was drawn, I think, by Jack Burnley. It was beautifully drawn. It was the way Batman should look, I felt.

I've talked about this many times, but yes, while I was at DC, they wouldn't let me near anything like that. I remember saying to Michael Fleischer about the characters I wanted to draw and he said, 'Look, you want to draw them now, because when they want you to draw them, you won't be interested.' And funnily enough, that was exactly the way it worked out! Over the years my appetite for that diminished.

I almost did Bizarro with Alan [Moore], and that fell apart. The Spectre was going to be with Alan or Michael Fleischer, but that didn't happen.

"YOU REALLY SHOULDN'T GIVE THIS TO THEM, IT'S BETTER THAN THAT, GET FIRST RIGHTS"

Nothing ever quite worked and by the time they offered me anything, I was really just doing *Marshall Law* and *League* and I didn't need to do those books any more.

Also, I think it's important that, over the years, these characters are driven much more by the need for crossovers and big events and so on, so you can't have oddball people coming in and doing totally different issues like you used to in the old days. I used to love that, the variety of it, but that seems less likely now. Everything is planned for a year ahead, but of course in the old days Marvel made it up as it went along! Jack Kirby made up the Silver Surfer on the spot – you'd have these incredible characters coming out of thin air. That seems less likely if you're planning a year or two ahead – there's less likelihood of being startled when pragmatic business decisions are happening all the time.

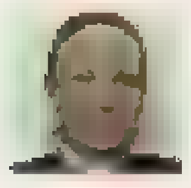
But I'm a bit out of the loop on the modern superhero comic, I don't see much of that these days. I got a lot of my superhero stuff through working on *Marshall Law*. CH

COMIC HEROES

ROGUES' GALLERY

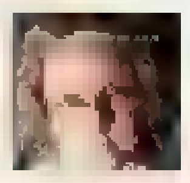
Colourists unite! Here are the gracious men and women in this feature...

David Baron
David's credits include colouring the Millar/Quitely run on *The Authority*.
Superpower: The Baron Knights



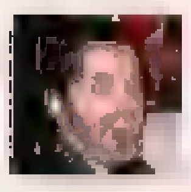
Gary Caldwell
See some Caldwell classics in *2000 AD* and *The Judge Dredd Megazine*. Yep!
Superpower: The Gary Parry

Frank D'Armata
The exotically-named Mr D'Armata has done loooads of Marvel magnificence.
Superpower: The Frank Spank



Laura Martin
A colouring legend, with *Planetary* and *Ministry of Space* to her name.
Superpower: The Laura Aura

Dave Stewart
You might recognise Dave's work with Mike Mignola on *Hellboy*. Coo!
Superpower: Stew Art



Val Staples
Criminal! *Incognito*! *Superman*! The man Staples done good, oh yeah.
Superpower: Val's Little Pal

Chris Blythe
Another *2000 AD* alumnus, Chris has also done pots of work for DC.
Superpower: The Blythe Spirit

Len O'Grady
Len's perhaps best known for his work on IDW's *Star Trek* books.
Superpower: The Grady Bunch

Lee Loughridge
Arkham Asylum: Living Hell, *The House on the Borderland*, *Batman Adventures*!
Superpower: Attack of the Killer Lees

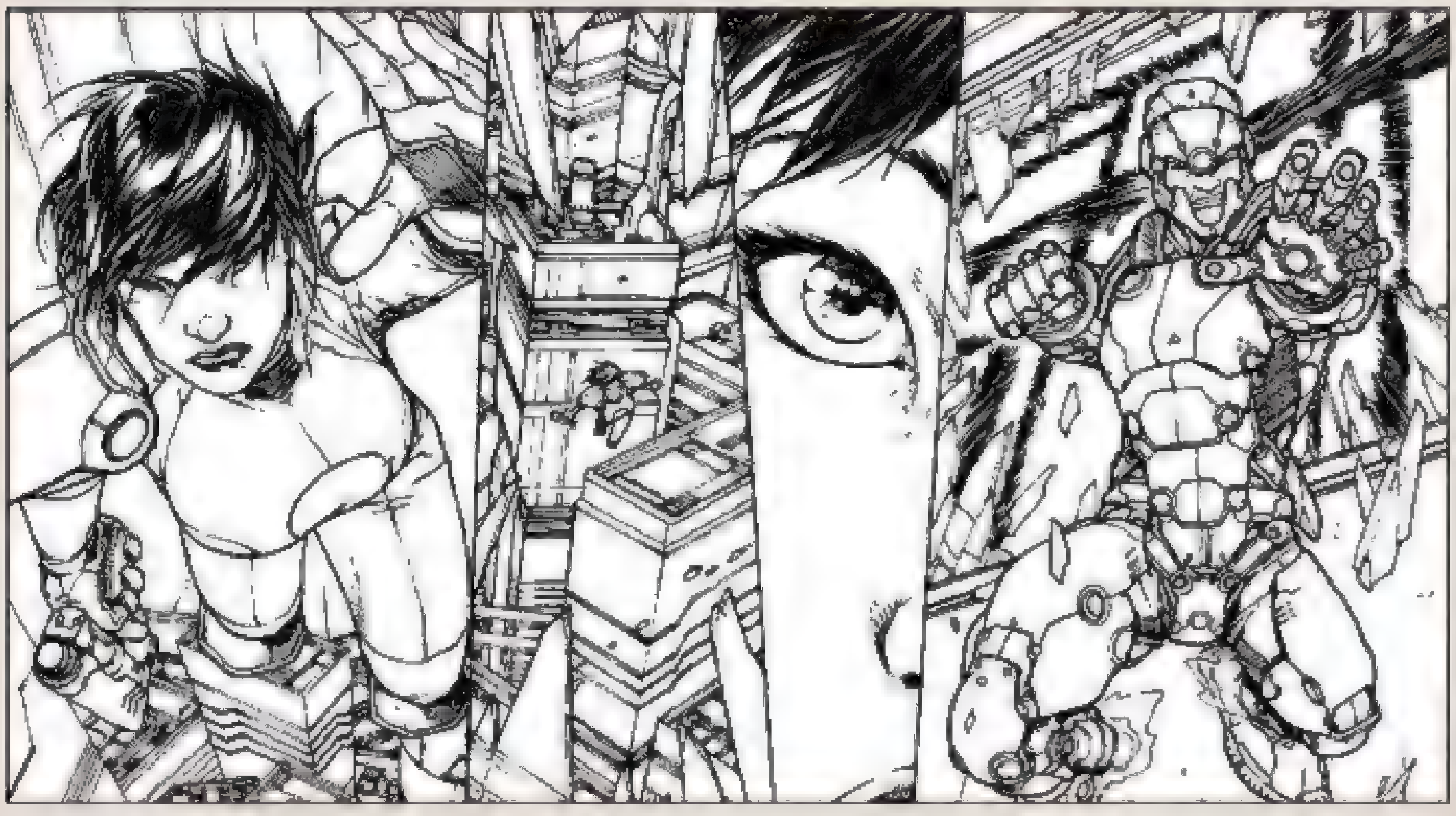
John Higgins
Comics legend John has done *2000 AD*, *Hellblazer*, *Razorjack* and more.
Superpower: The Hig Dig

COMIC HEROES
PRESS

Volume 5 Spring 2011 How To...

HOW TO... COLOUR COMICS

And so we focus on the unsung heroes of the comics world – the mighty colourists! By Rob Williams



One imagines it must be a source of occasional annoyance to the highly skilled colourers of the comics world that they rarely get the credit their work deserves. But try to imagine a *Watchmen* without John Higgins' palette, *The Ultimates* without Laura Martin, *Hellboy* without Dave Stewart. So, do colourists get the big autograph queues at comic conventions? Rarely. This isn't a line of work to go into if you're looking for fame. But if you listen in on artists' conversations where they're desperate to get a certain colourist on their book, you'll know the worth these individuals have. Comics are, first and foremost, a storytelling medium, and the colourist's choices have a huge part to play in the mood and clarity of the narrative.

So, continuing our series of 'How To Make Comics' articles, we thought we'd let some of the unsung heroes of the comics world tell you about how they make your favourite comics look so vibrant, evocative and wonderful.

»

Q HOW DID YOU BECOME A COLOURIST?

How do you get into this particular suburb of the comics township?

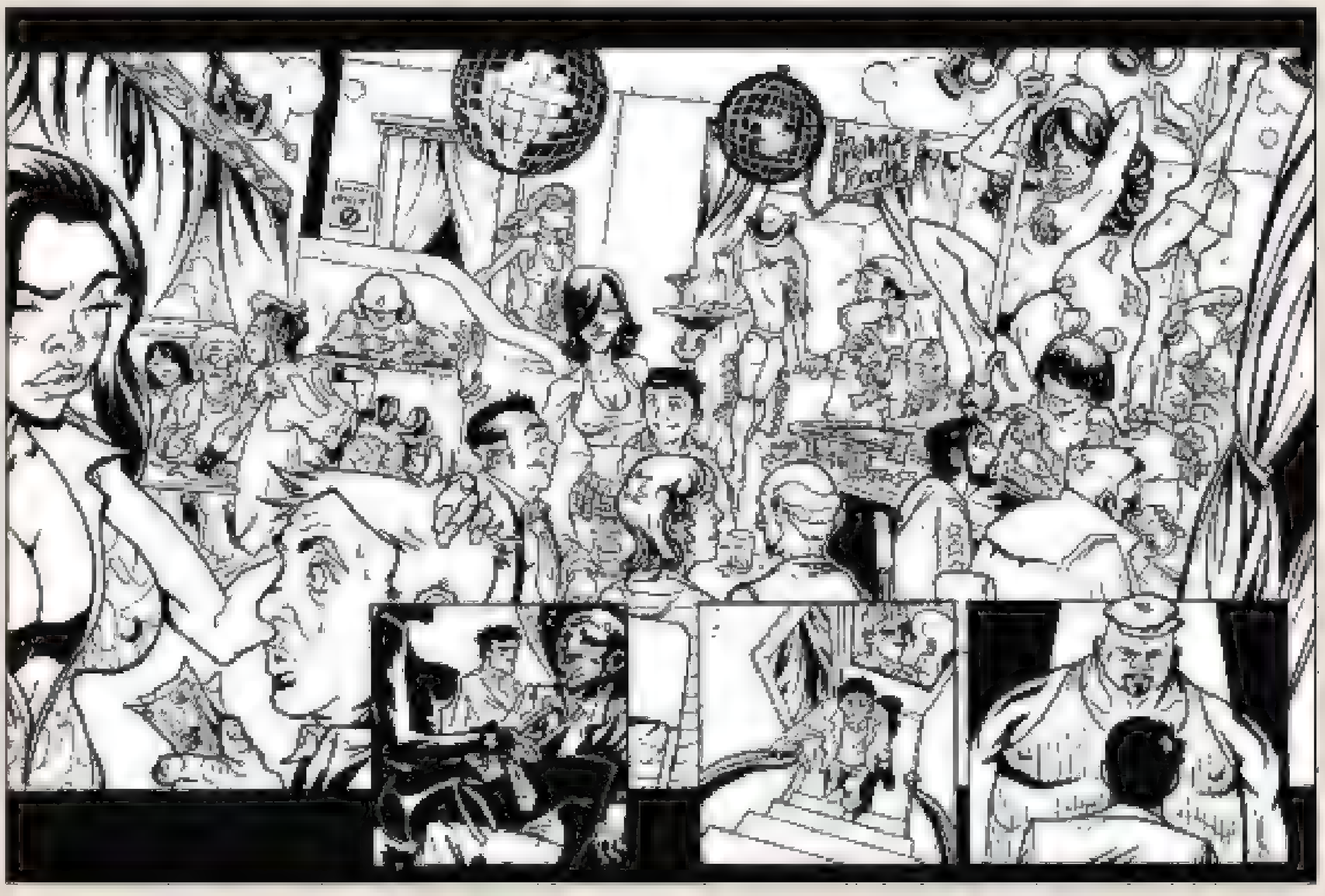
Frank D'Armata *(Avengers, Captain America):* I wanted to be an illustrator but, as always, found out I didn't have the chops or background that many of the pencillers did at the time. So I started screwing around more with composition and fell into colouring as a complete fluke.

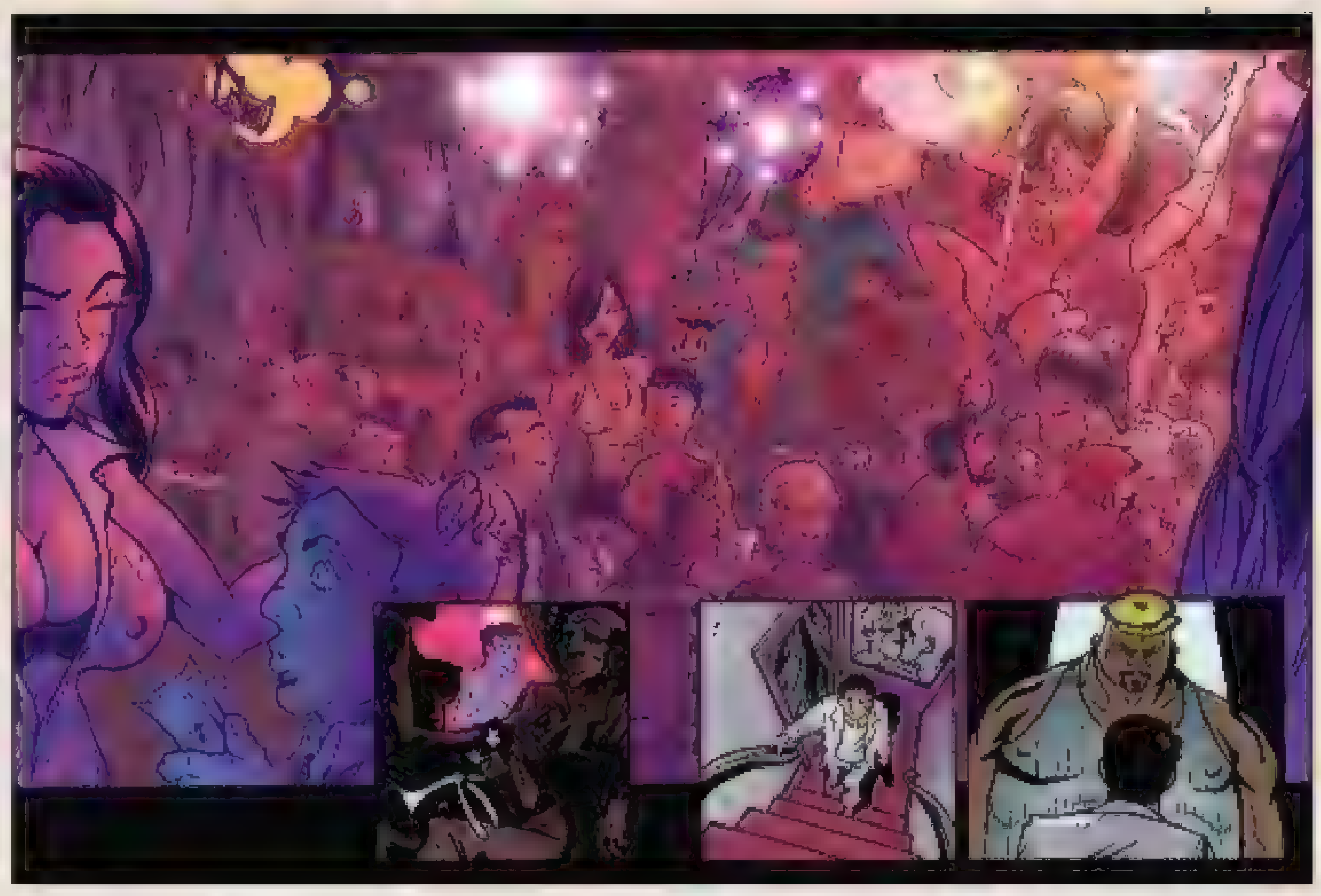
John Higgins *(Watchmen, The Killing Joke):* In the mid '80s, nearly all comics in the UK were black and white, and most of my contemporaries who were working in the industry had no colour experience and did very little of it. For me it was the other way around. Most of my work had been done in colour for either book or magazine covers, so artists such as Steve Dillon and Dave Gibbons started asking me to collaborate with them on the colour commissions they were getting.

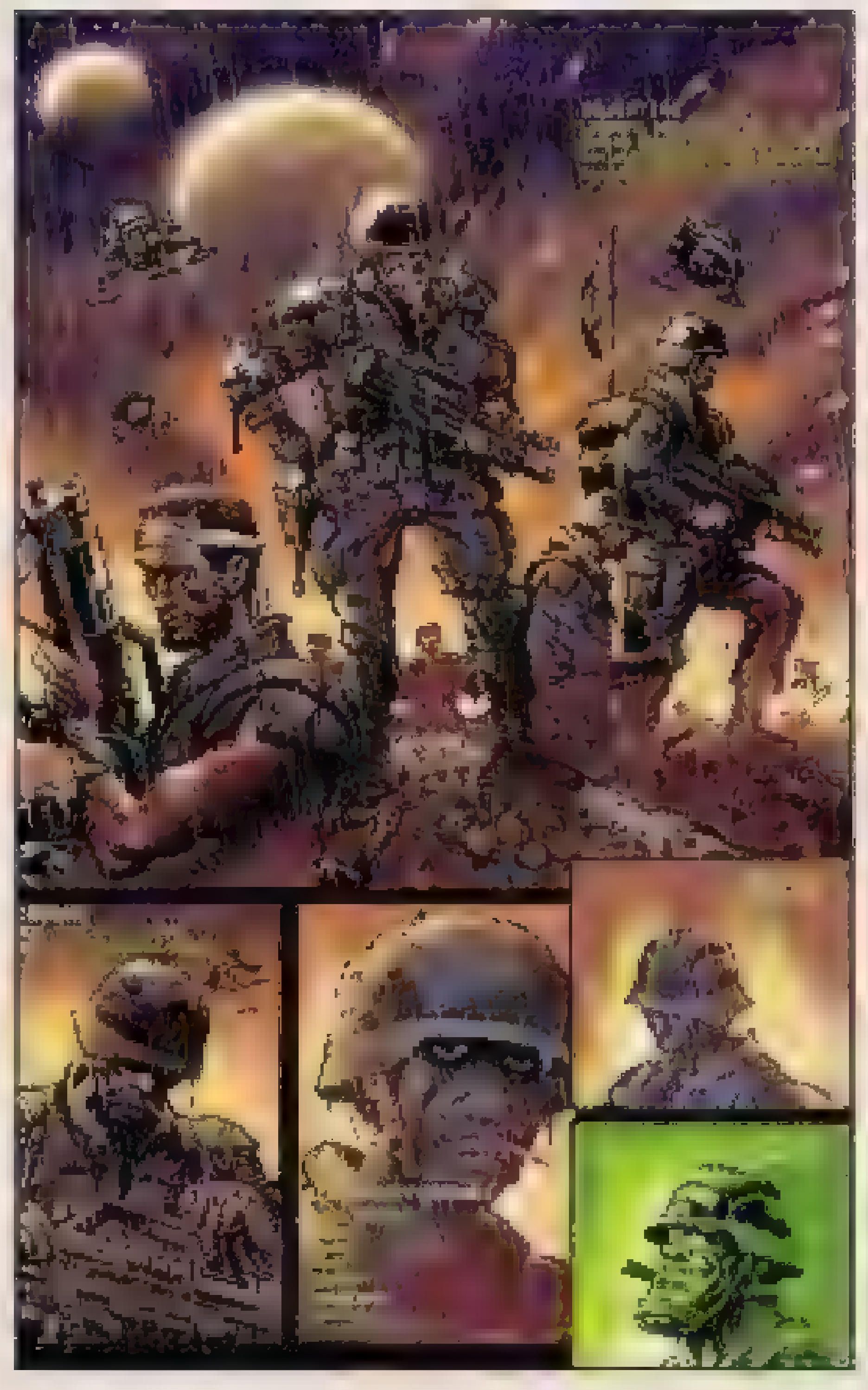
Gary Caldwell *(Nikolai Dante, 2000 AD):* I started out as an artist, my first significant work being a three-part painted *James Bond* series for Dark Horse. Unfortunately, it took me so long to do and involved so many sleepless nights that I decided never to go there again. After a while, an artist I knew called Alex Ronald asked me to colour a five-page one off he was drawing for *2000 AD*. In the process, I discovered that the job of a colourist was easy compared to that of an artist, so I decided to stick with it. Since then, I've never had a sleepless night or had to worry about meeting a deadline. For me, it was similar to wanting to be the lead guitarist in a band, doing so and then deciding after a while that you'd be happier playing bass.

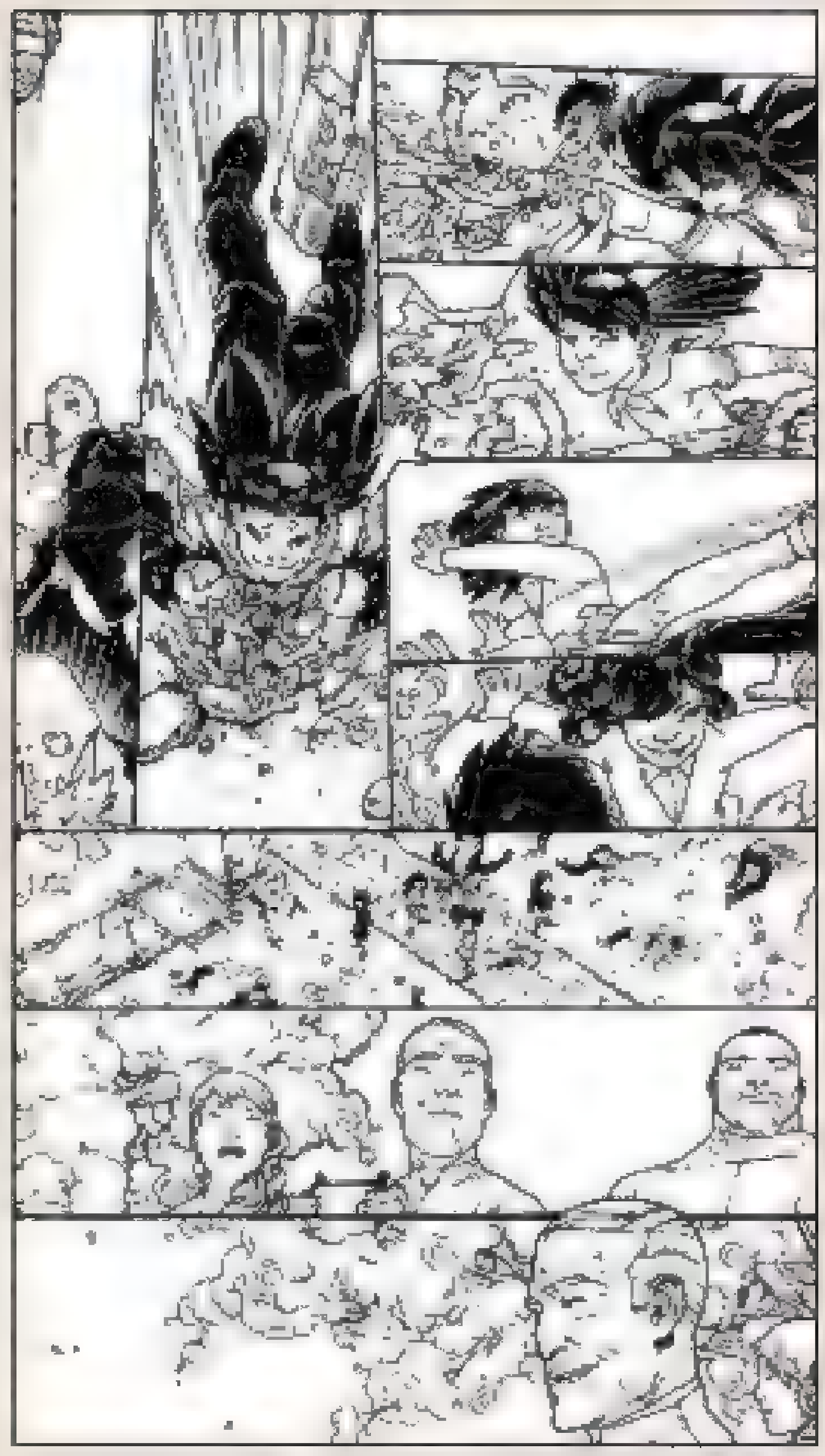
Chris Blythe *(Angel Fire, 2000 AD):* Does anyone really set out to become a colourist? I began as a cartoonist and an illustrator. When I started involving computers, I wondered whether they could be used to colour comics effectively. I scanned some old *2000 AD*s and sent in some examples. I got a short story to work on and now it's 11 years later. Colouring work became the most abundant and lucrative option. It was pure economics.

Len O'Grady *(Cla$$war, 2000 AD):* I grew up with *2000 AD* so, for me, black and white was king. I'd always intended to work in comics but, that said, by the time I left art college, the opportunity came entirely out of left field. A local repro house in Dublin had set themselves up as an archive for the printing plates for Marvel, DC, Image and Archie Comics, and had expanded







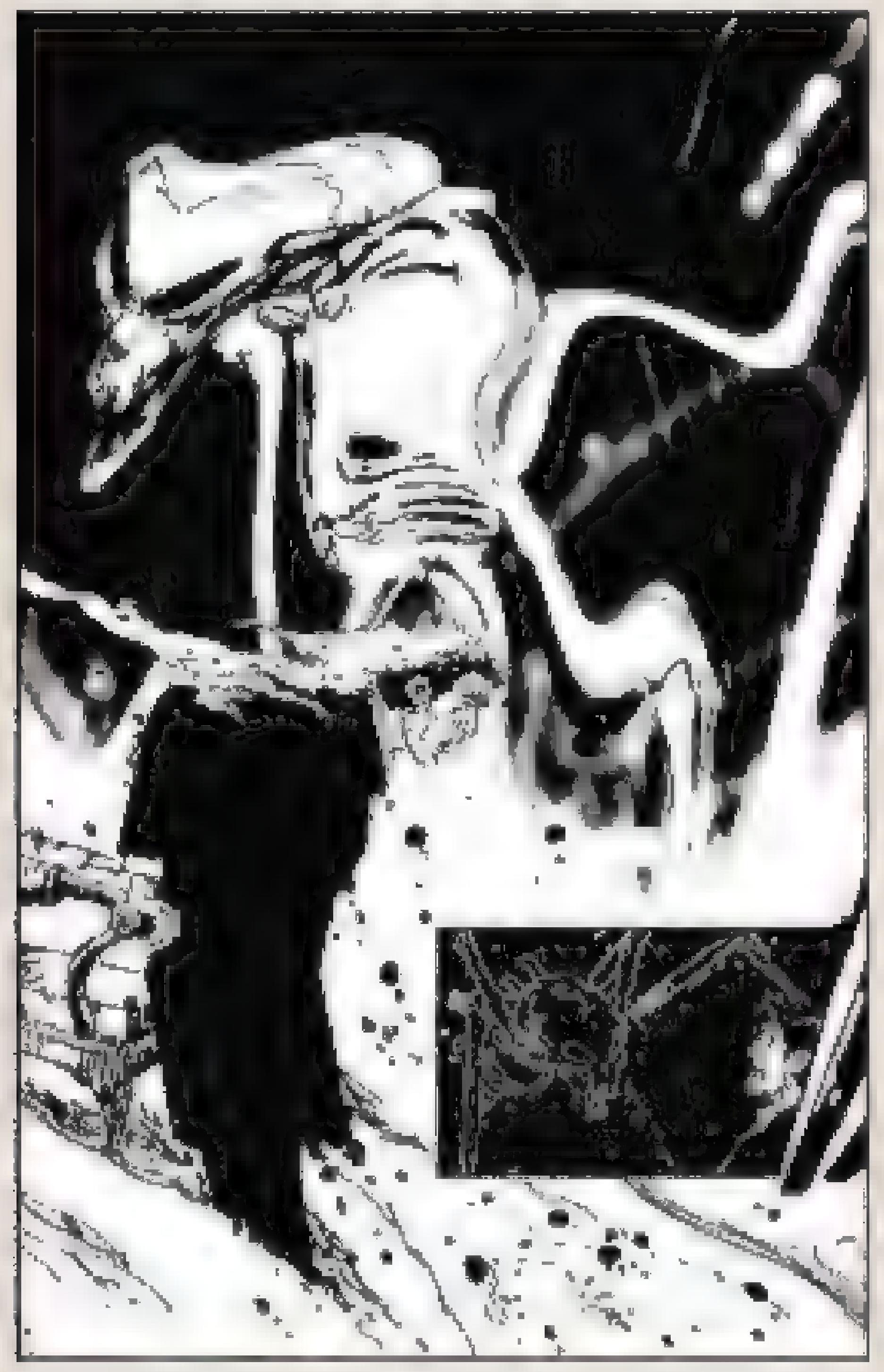


LEFT: Colours courtesy of Chris Blythe.

ABOVE RIGHT: Len O' Grady colours *Scarface*.

RIGHT: More *Hondo City Justice* by Caldwell and Googe.

BAAAAAAD TRIIIIIIIIP



into doing the rendering end of things too. This was very much at the back end of the previous era, when we'd get pouches of original artwork to be scanned and magic marker colour guides to follow. It was a tough gig, but also extremely useful, because you were at the coalface of actually making comics. After two years, I left to go solo and apply what I'd learnt. I ended up being put in contact with David Bishop at *2000 AD*.

David Baron ***(Detective Comics, Batman Confidential):*** I got lucky. I grew up in San Diego and read my first superhero comic, *X-Force*, when I was in the sixth grade. I went to my first convention, the San Diego Comic-Con, in the seventh grade and saw my first portfolio review line the next year. I showed my collection – all done in pencil, since I'd never even heard of computer colouring at that time – in ninth grade. It didn't go well.

Then, at the age of 15, at the WildStorm portfolio line during SDCC, I was turned away because the line was already capped. However, a woman (who turned out to be Jim Lee's mother-in-law) gave me her WildStorm business card. I believe her good nature couldn't turn down such an innocent boy. I called the number on the card the following week, not really knowing a thing about... well, anything. The people at WildStorm told me they had a policy of not hiring anyone under 18, but gave me another number of a colouring house in the area, In Color, and suggested I call them.

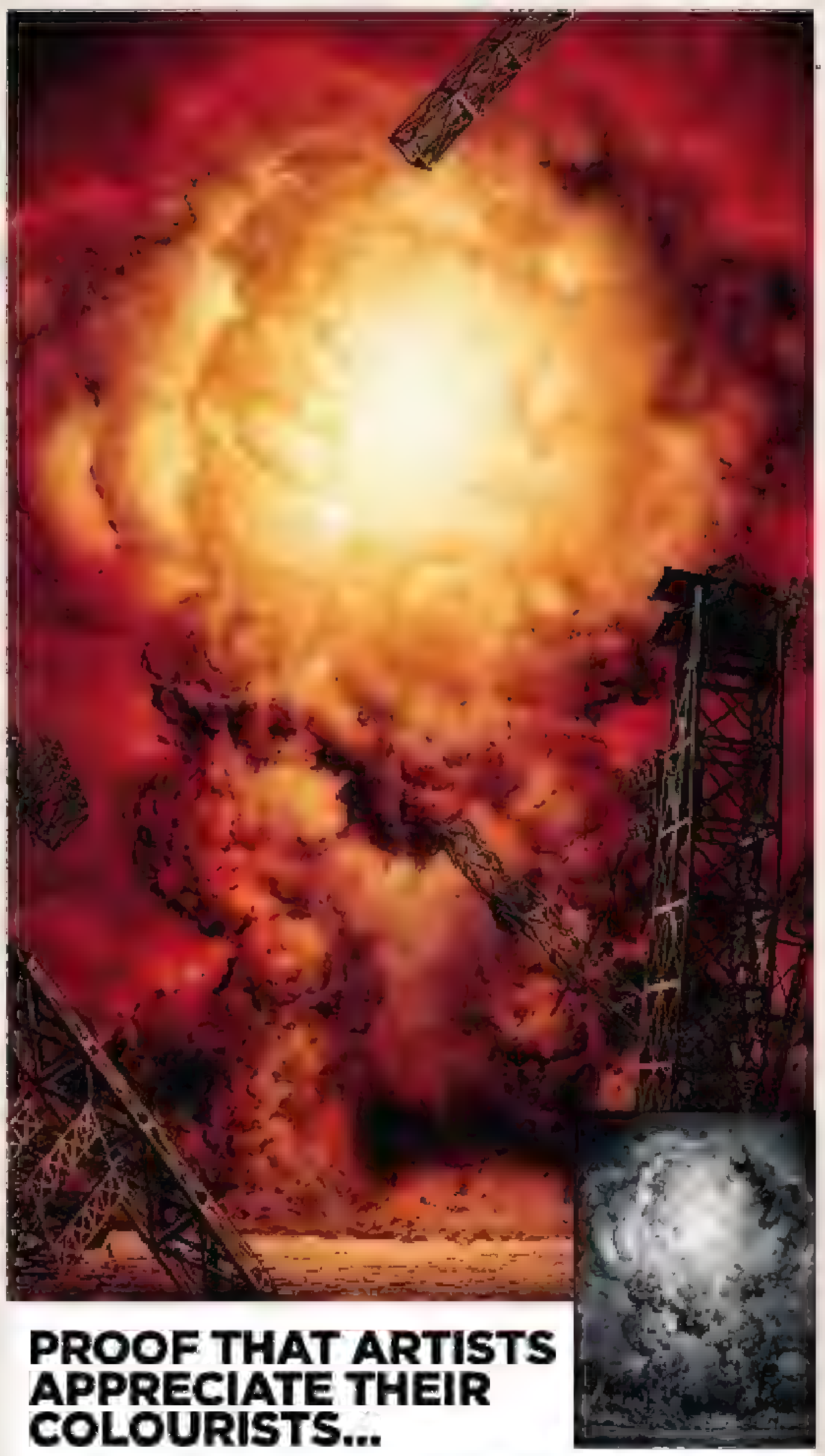
I did, bringing my portfolio of pencil work along to the interview. Then, by the luck of God and kindness of In Color's Clydene Nee, I was brought on at the age of 15 to colour comics. I worked on everything from *Spawn* trading cards to WildStorm titles such as *Wetworks* and *Casper*.

Dave Stewart ***(Hellboy, BPRD):*** I wanted to be a penciller at first, but I did have an interest in colouring. I was experimenting with it in my Photoshop class in college when my instructors at school set up a design internship with Dark Horse comics. During that placement, Matt Hollingsworth saw some full-size cutouts I was painting with dyes for the SDCC, and suggested I try out for a job as a guide painter. I didn't get that role, because I didn't know what I was doing, but was instead given the position of separator – a job on the computer interpreting those guides into vector graphics. The colouring thing just seemed to click.

Laura Martin ***(The Ultimates, The Authority):*** I'd read comics growing up but wasn't massively into them until college. I was a graphic design major at the University of Central Florida and had assumed that I would get a job at one of the Orlando theme parks after school. Then I met some huge comics nerds. They got me back into the genre, particularly titles from Image. One of them, an art student at Ringling College of Art and Design, had set his sights on a WildStorm talent search. He suggested that I should consider a career in comics, and a light went on in my head. He got the job and I concentrated my senior portfolio efforts on comics, with the intention of joining WildStorm after graduation. Which is pretty much what I did.

My intention was to be a colourist for a couple of years, then switch over to pencilling and/or inking, but I found out that people actually liked my colouring, and I rather enjoyed being the scrappy underdog of the creative team. Plus, I was so busy colouring that I had no time to practise pencilling! Fifteen years later, I'm still wondering when I'll have time to sketch anything.

Val Staples ***(Criminal, Incognito):*** I originally wanted to focus more on writing comics than colouring them. I've always been an artist, even when I was growing up, but I don't have the natural skills to be a really good illustrator. So when my friend Matt Tyree and I started exploring indie publishing back in 1996, he pencilled and inked and I wrote. However, we still needed a colourist and letterer, so I decided to learn how to do both. I never developed a knack for lettering but I gravitated towards colouring. I figured that if I was good at it then it could be another route into the industry. And, fortunately for me, it turned out to be exactly that.



PROOF THAT ARTISTS APPRECIATE THEIR COLOURISTS...

When *Comic Heroes* was putting together this piece, artist Chris Weston (*The Filth*) asked if it would be okay for him to offer a mini tribute to how important he feels Laura Martin was to the success of their Image mini-series, the Warren Ellis-penned *Ministry Of Space*:

"It's not often a colourist receives a credit on the spine of a collected edition, but I think Laura Martin fully deserves the equal billing she got for her work. Her colouring was integral to the whole project, and I would definitely veto any suggestions for the work to be printed in black and white.

Usually, I design pieces that will hold up in monochrome; that reduces the risk of them being ruined by bad colouring and increases the chance of them being reprinted in foreign territories. It also makes it easier to sell the original black and white artworks. However, upon seeing the first few coloured pages of *Ministry Of Space*, I quickly realised that my work was in expert hands; I'd be able to dispense with my usual immense amounts of detailed shading. I even asked Laura to remove great swathes of my cross-hatching on some pages – something completely alien to my nature.

The nuclear explosion on page 13 of *Ministry Of Space* issue three is my personal favourite of the whole book, and a good example of the extent of our collaboration. It would be impossible to separate exactly what was my contribution to that page and what was Laura's. I'd love to do another project with her in the style of that page.

Since moving into the arena of digitally colouring my own work, I have to confess that I slavishly try to replicate Laura's trademark techniques. I hope she doesn't mind!"

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Q HOW IMPORTANT IS A COLOURIST TO THE SUCCESS OF A BOOK? AND HOW CRUCIAL IS THE NARRATIVE IN THE COLOURING CHOICES YOU MAKE?

How colouring dovetails with pictures and words to make... comics!

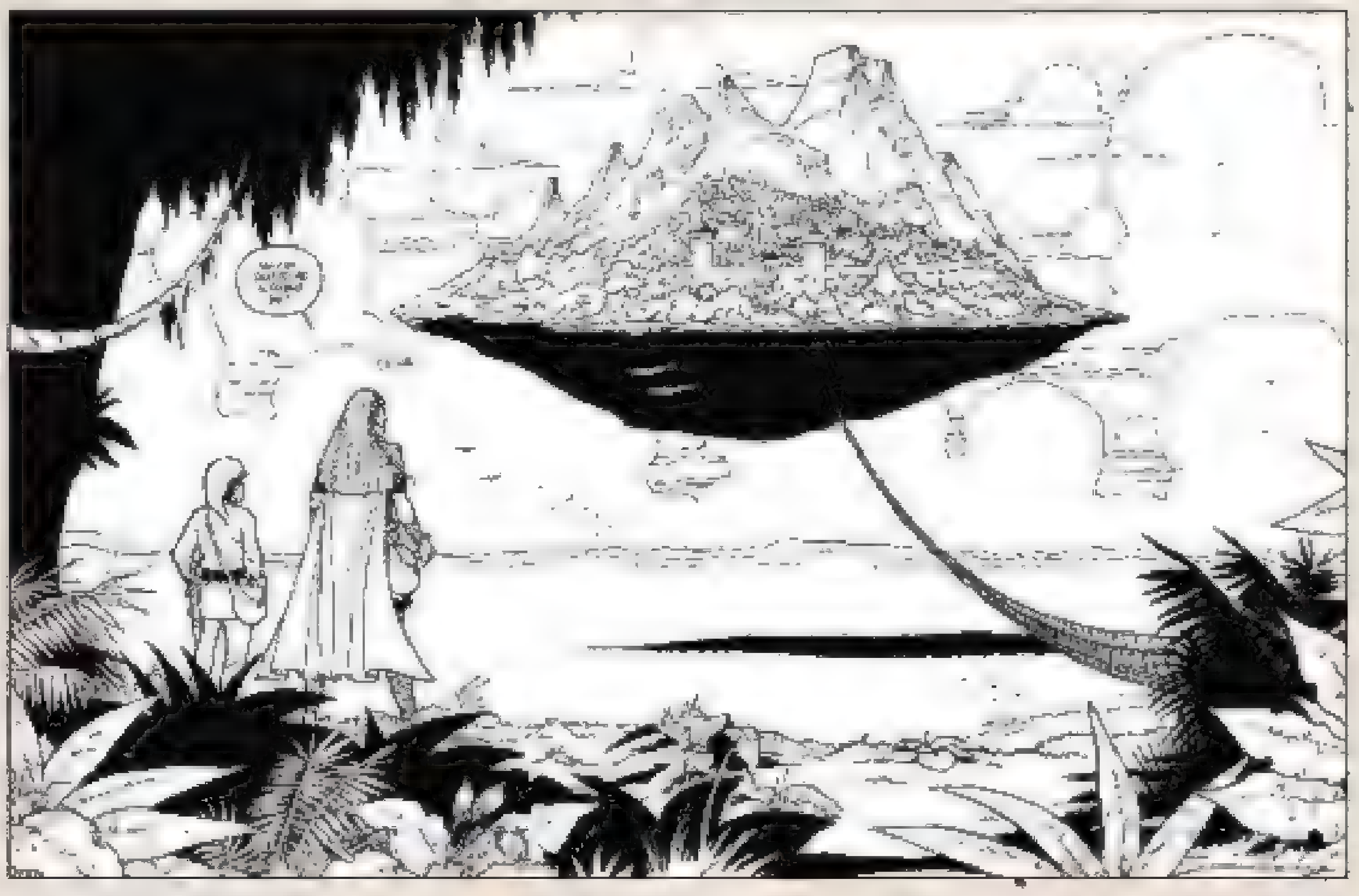
Val Staples: Colours quite often make or break a book, succeeding or failing to bring the black and white world to life. Mood, leading the eye, storytelling, enhancement through modelling of the line art... These are all important elements a colourist tries to add.

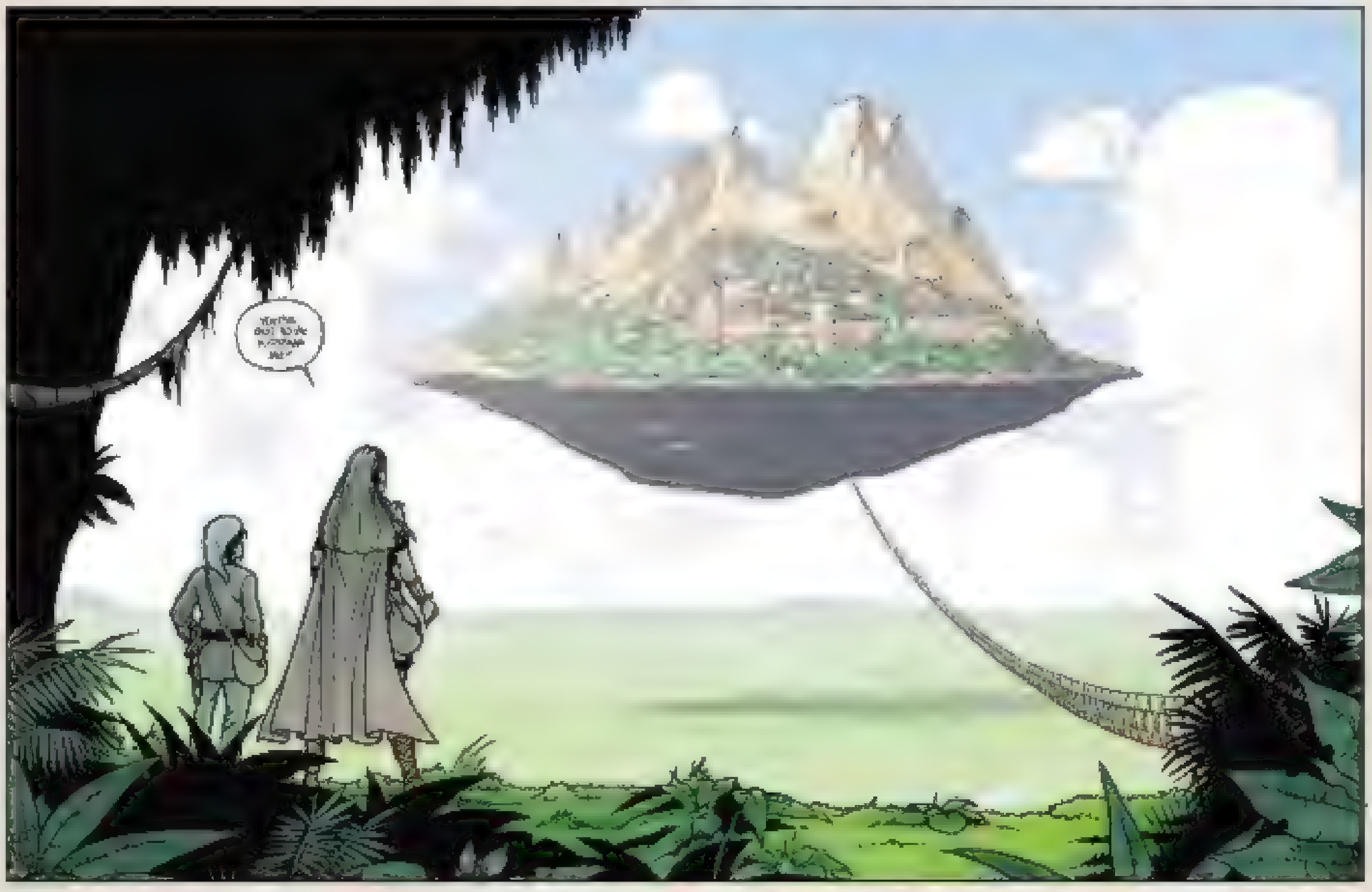
Frank D'Armata: I have to read through the script as I work to get the time of day and mood of what I'll be doing. Sometimes I have to go out of order, depending on the flow of pages coming my way, then I have to go back and correct what wasn't there in my deadline crunch.

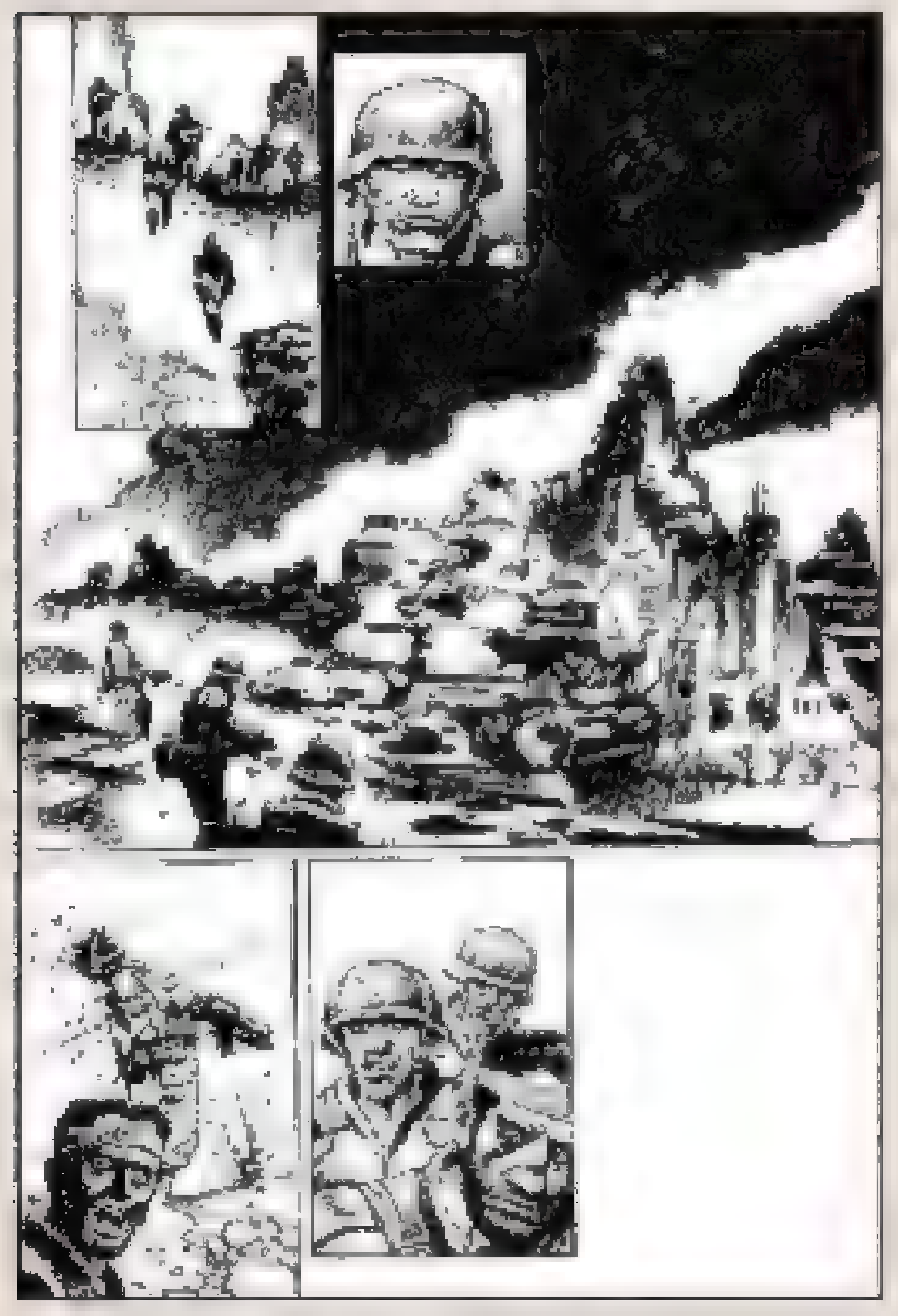
John Higgins: Colour is the first impression you get of a book, so it's important. It can show a potential buyer quality production values immediately. At the point of sale, colour is probably more important than any other single element. I'm completely committed to the narrative – pretty hues just for the sake of themselves are never enough.

Gary Caldwell: I think it's important to keep the narrative paramount. That said, there's always room to be less literal and do something more abstract every once in a while. You can use colour, for instance, to portray a character's emotional state or establish a mood.

Chris Blythe: I always ask for the script – I'm surprised when editors don't think it's necessary for the colourist to know the story. It's essential. Colour choice can totally change the mood of a piece.







LEFT: More *Ratings War* colours from the effortlessly awesome Chris Blythe.

ABOVE RIGHT: Len O'Grady colours Goran Sudzuka on *Beyond Avalon*.

Len O'Grady: If the writer and artist are the producer and director of the movie, then the colourist is the director of photography. They can enhance the storytelling on a page, help draw the reader's eye to what's relevant in each panel and, overall, help the eye as it goes over the page. Colour without awareness of narrative can strangle storytelling, regardless of the competency of the colourist.

David Baron: A colour artist adds more mood and feeling to the surrounding elements of the artwork. Drawings in black and white might be amazing, but mix that with the right colours and you might have something that will stand in the readers' minds forever.

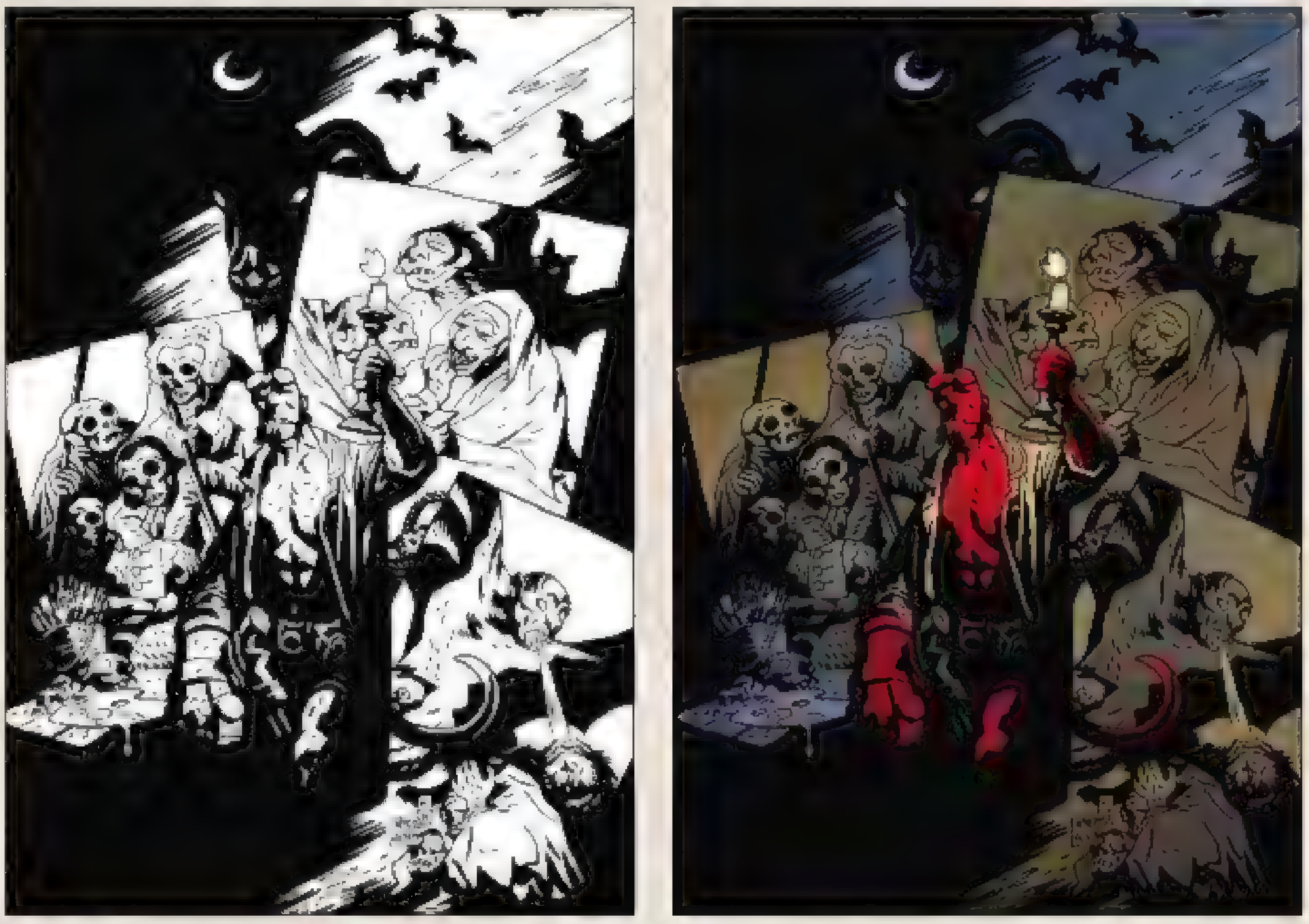
Dave Stewart: I think the funny thing is that good colourists are noticed less than bad ones. A poor practitioner can completely kill a project, while a talented one really helps move the story along and strengthen the art. Depth, form, mood, atmosphere, flow and readability are all things a colourist might have control over.

Laura Martin: Colouring is absolutely intrinsic to the storytelling, cementing the mood and setting in the reader's mind. It also creates an emotional link to your audience, and well-placed highlights and shadows can guide people through panels and scene changes. Colouring can break storytelling rules in a way that cinematography can't – by suddenly altering a background shade in an impact panel, for example. It can also separate foreground elements from background ones that may not be as clear in the black and white line art, and adds dimensionality as well as impact.

It's possible to kill really good art with so-so colouring. Line art can be overcoloured to death; too many hues and textures on the page will just end up confusing and annoying the eye. Less is more, in many cases.

A lot of writers include colour notes in their narratives; they could be as simple as stating whether the scene's taking place during the day or at night, or they might be highly detailed, with mood indications: "This is a dark, dingy, dirty hallway lit only by harsh, yellow sodium lights," for instance. So the script, and the penciller's and inker's interpretation of that script, are the colourist's foundation.

Lee Loughridge ***(Punisher Max, Fables):*** I think a perfect book is one where you don't notice one thing over the other – it's just perfectly balanced. I've seen colourists murder art in the past: guys who do full modelling over those with a simplistic style like that of Frank Miller or Mike Mignola. The narrative has everything to do with what palettes I choose. Whether it tells me the time of day or emotion, all of that comes into play.



ABOVE: Dave Stewart has the enviable job of colouring Mike Mignola's *Hellboy*. Nice!

Q DESCRIBE YOUR PROCESS. WHAT ARE THE TOOLS OF YOUR TRADE?

Here's a tip: you'll need to know how to use a computer...

Val Staples: I was old school in the sense that I was one of the last colourists coming into the business who had a lot of pre-press knowledge. That meant I could understand the printing process intimately on both an artistic and technical basis, and why things look the way they do in final format. This was, and still is, extremely valuable in appreciating how to make your digital product look the way you want it to in print. Adobe Photoshop is the standard in comics now. While Painter is awesome, Adobe has far more pre-press configurations that are vital for printed media. Outside of that, I use a laptop and Wacom tablet. Nothing terribly fancy.

Frank D'Armata: I started doing colour guides before I did computer generated colouring. If you can do well with one technique, chances are you can do the same with any. As for tools, I use a PC, Wacom Intuos3 and an archaic copy of Photoshop 5.5.

John Higgins: Sadly, it's all on computer now. Don't get me wrong – Photoshop is brilliant because it gives me all the effects I had to strive for with paint and airbrushes in the past, and it's extremely fast compared to traditional methods. Computers have created a high-quality but generic look, though.

Gary Caldwell: I used to airbrush and then paint on photocopies of the original pages. Eventually, though, I had to switch over to computer colouring. I create a single layer, set to multiply, above the black and white layer. Then I paint or fill in each element using the pencil or straight lasso tool in combination with the fill bucket. That done, I isolate each section and then flat tone or airbrush it accordingly. Then I flatten the coloured layer onto the one that contains the art. My tools are Photoshop and an A6 Wacom tablet (with a Bamboo pen, at the moment).

Chris Blythe: It's all about computers, primarily for speed and accuracy – and the magical ability to undo! I used to make a lot of elements, and then scan them in – ink washes and chalk rubbings for space backgrounds, rusty metal or what have you. Now you can pretty much do everything on the computer. But I miss getting my hands dirty. My tools are Photoshop and Painter. I actually still use Photoshop 4, which is really old but does everything I need.

Len O'Grady: It's all about the computer. The editorial process and the workload simply don't permit much by way of pigments on paper. What you have on a screen is what an editor 2,000 miles away will open in his inbox two minutes later. The first things I look at are the key elements of the page, making visual crib notes for what's relevant to the story. Then, depending on the mood, I start off with the background and work into the characters. That way, the environment has a chance to take effect and help set the mood. I used to be a bit of a purist, but over the years I've seen the Mac become more of a chameleon. A good description I heard once was that we're painting with light – I like that idea.

As for tools, I've always used a Mac, but only toyed with using a tablet until last year, when I moved to using a Wacom Cintiq so I could paint right on the screen. It saves my hand a lot. Right now I use a 2.53 GHz MacBook Pro Intel Core i5 with 8GB of memory.

David Baron: Almost everything I do is on the computer. Occasionally I might paint a texture or two 'old school', but nowadays it's possible to do almost anything you can achieve with a brush in Photoshop. The key is to have that base in traditional art and bring it to your digital work. I have a 2.93 GHz iMac Intel Core i7 with 16 GB, 1333 MHz DDR3 and about 5TB of storage. I run Mac OS X 10.6.5 and also use Photoshop CS5 and Illustrator CS5.

Dave Stewart: All of my work is done on the computer. I receive the line art digitally and send it off to be flattened – a process of making selections that saves me some time. Then I start colouring. If I have the luxury of working on the entire project, I go through the book and create a colour design. That involves designating the scene changes, reading the plot to highlight story points, etc. After that, I'll jump into rendering.

I just have Photoshop CS3 right now with the Cintiq monitor, which is amazing. I try to use it as a big paint set. I'd rather paint in an effect than let the computer do it, so I try to hide the cold, technical side of the computer and let the warmth of the human hand take over. There are a couple of brushes I use, but nothing special.

Laura Martin: It's all about Photoshop: every lick of it, since the day I started. The process is as follows: the inks get scanned at high resolution, and the scan is uploaded to the Marvel server, where I download it and start working. The script and any reference material I may need are also put onto the server.

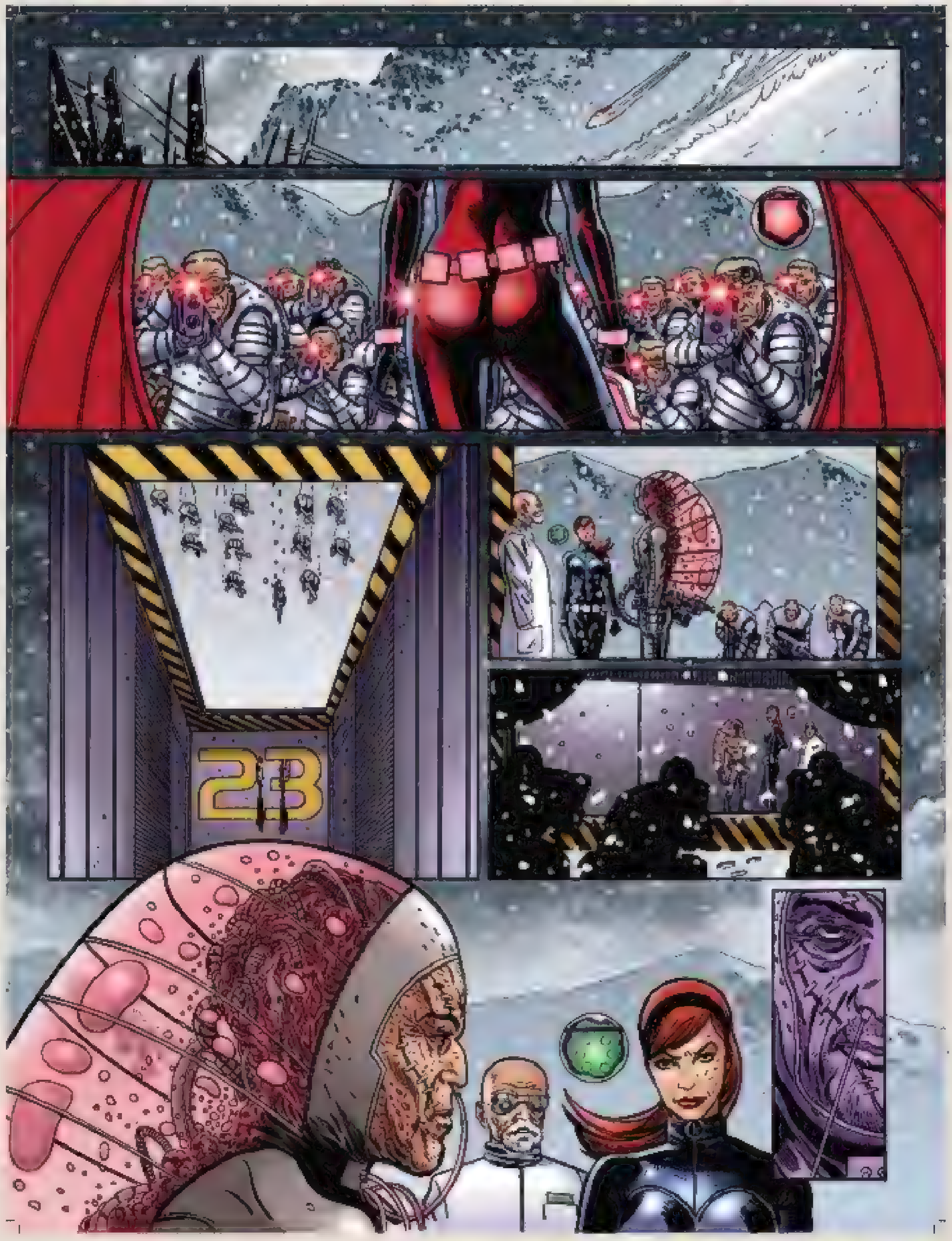
The first step is to 'flat' the page. This involves laying in the basic, flat colours for each shape on there. The result looks a little like a Sunday comic or basic animation.

From that point, I'll determine the colour scheme. I'll think about the storyline and consult the script, and decide on a family of hues that will affect the whole scene. Let's say the setting is the laboratory of a cruel genius. I'll think about what would give off an evil vibe in that lab as compared to, say, Reed Richards's. It would probably be dirty, poorly lit and smelly. I'll pick out a main colour concept to indicate that: greenish-tinted greys, and maybe some browns and dull slate blues for shadows. Sickly yellow or greenish fluorescent lighting – or even low illumination coming only from computer screens and LEDs – will round out the scheme. I'll start changing the colours of the flats to reflect that idea, so that before I paint on a highlight or shadow, I'll have the overall mood of the page established.

From there, I'll 'read' the line art to figure out where the lighting is (from above? From computer screens?) and start rendering in the highlights and shadows. I'll consider the story and bring out the focal point, which is the place in the panel where the most action is happening. I'll zoom out and look at the whole page while I work, so that I don't get caught up in tiny details that won't matter in print. No one's going to care if I put a highlight on a fingernail that's eight pixels wide.

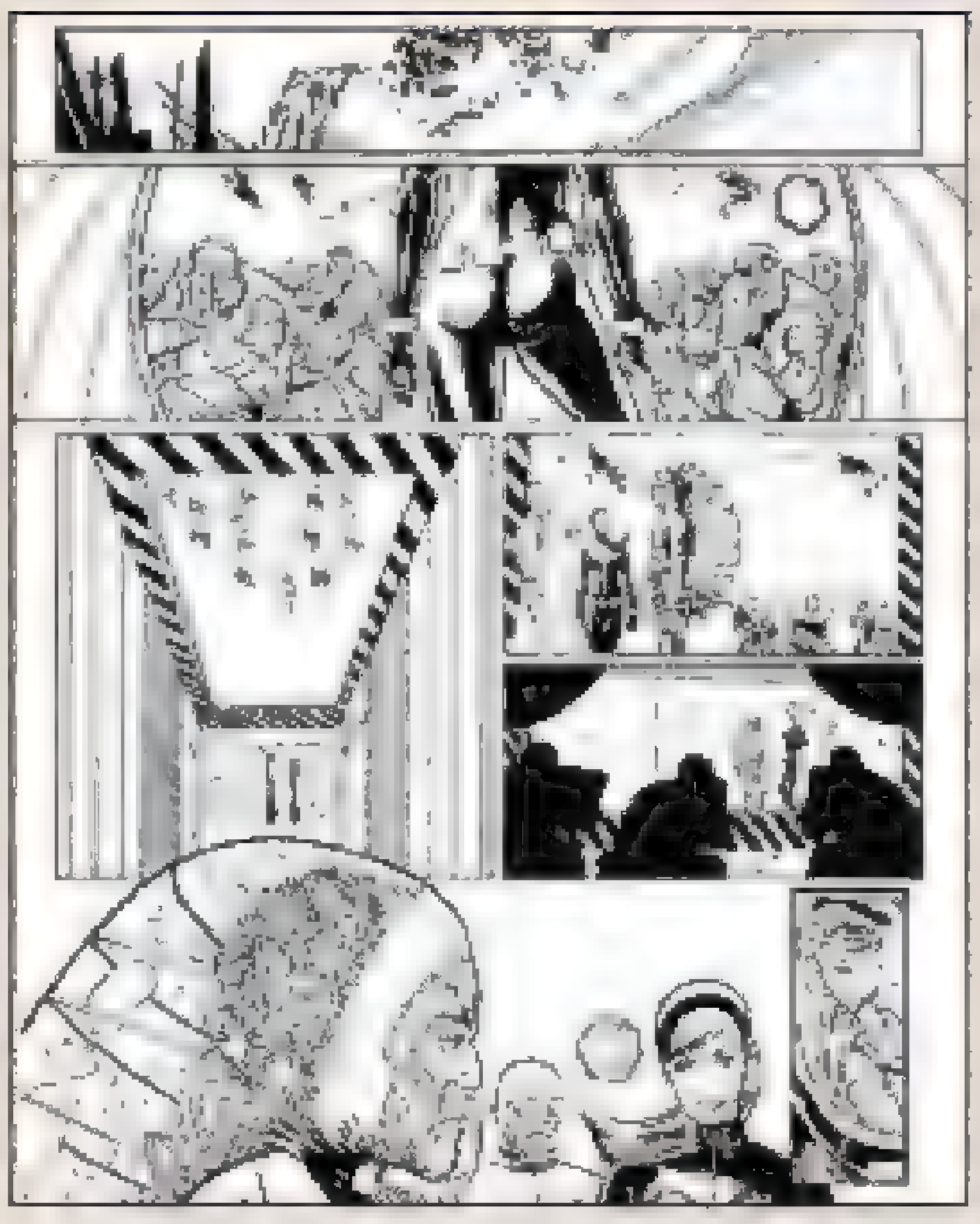
I'll finish off the page, add special effects such as glows or rain, and then save a low-res version and send it off to my creative and editorial teams. They'll decide if any changes are needed and send me corrections. I'll then make the alterations, send back another proof and, when the page is approved, prep the page for print and upload it to the server again.

Right now I'm using Photoshop CS3 on a Mac Pro with an 8-core processor and 6GB of RAM, and am running OS X 10.5.8. I'm not one of the cool kids who owns a Cintiq – I'm still using a standard Wacom Intuos.



Lee Loughridge: It's all computerised nowadays. I usually read the script, then map out the scenes I need to do and figure out what sort of technique I want to use. I try to stay away from an over-rendered style, which I think is a complete copout, to be honest. Ninety per cent of the colourists out there make everything over-rendered and, as a result, things look like they've been dipped in oil. These people do a disservice to the pencillers by making their work look just like everything else out there. It's such a gimmick, but a lot of people like that sort of thing, I suppose. In terms of tools, I use a Mac and a Cintiq screen. In my opinion, it's the only way to go. Photoshop is my program of choice.

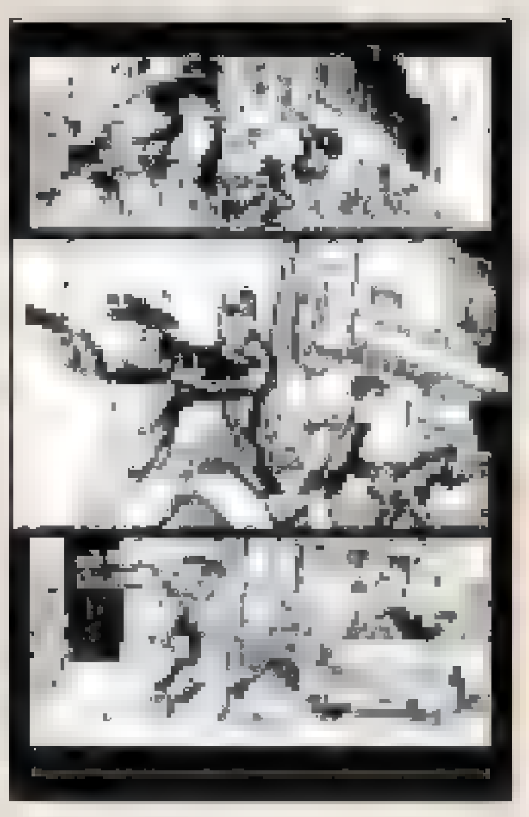
ABOVE: More of Gary Caldwell's lovely colouring. Nice brain work there, eh?



Q DOES IT ANNOY YOU THAT THE ARTIST AND WRITER GET ALL THE CREDIT, AND COLOURISTS RARELY GET MENTIONED?

Where does the colourist stand in the grand order of things?

Frank D'armata: That's just the standard of the industry. We get a lot of thanks from the art teams we work with, much more than the general public gives us, and that means a lot, and keeps us motivated.

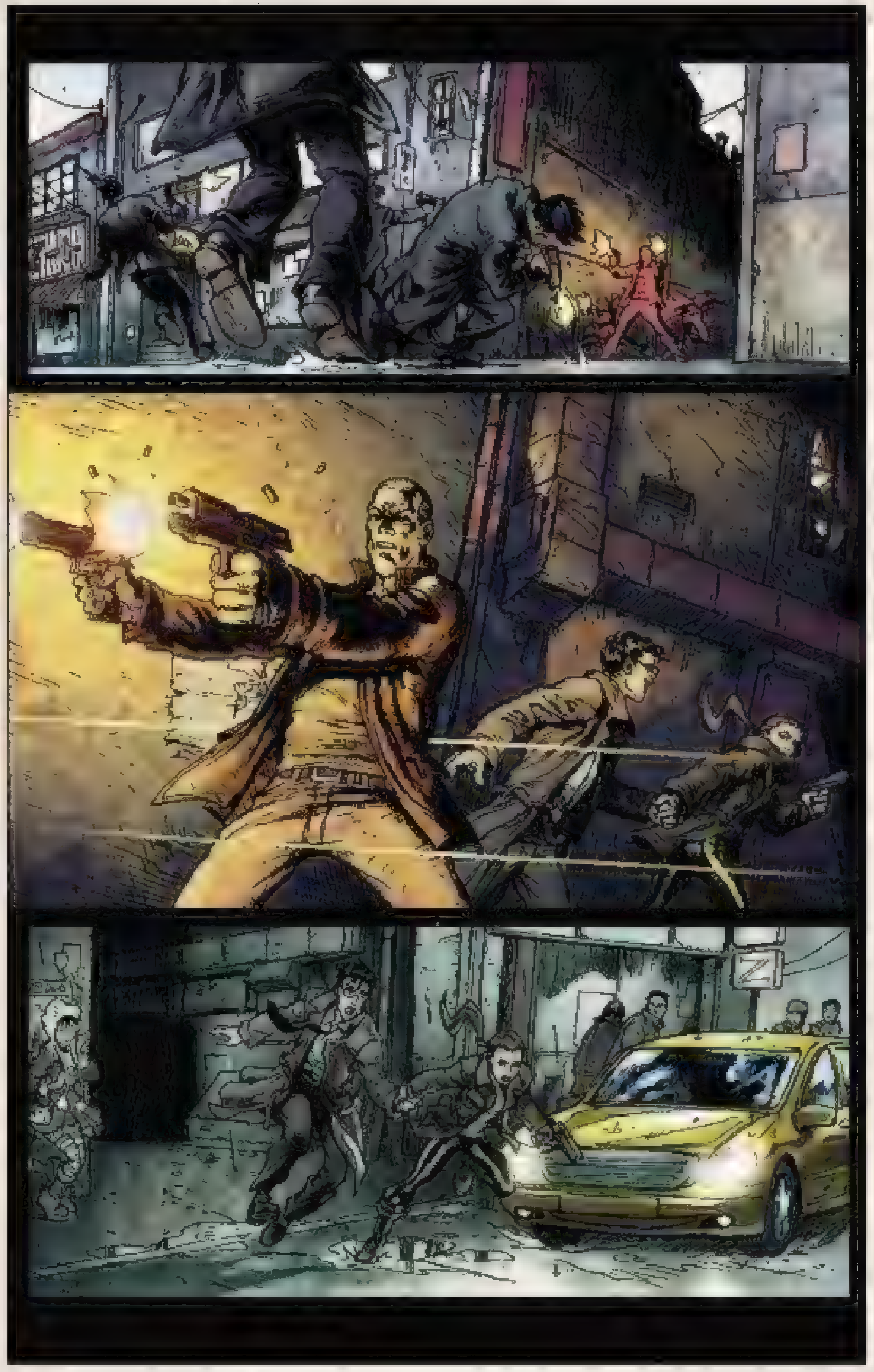


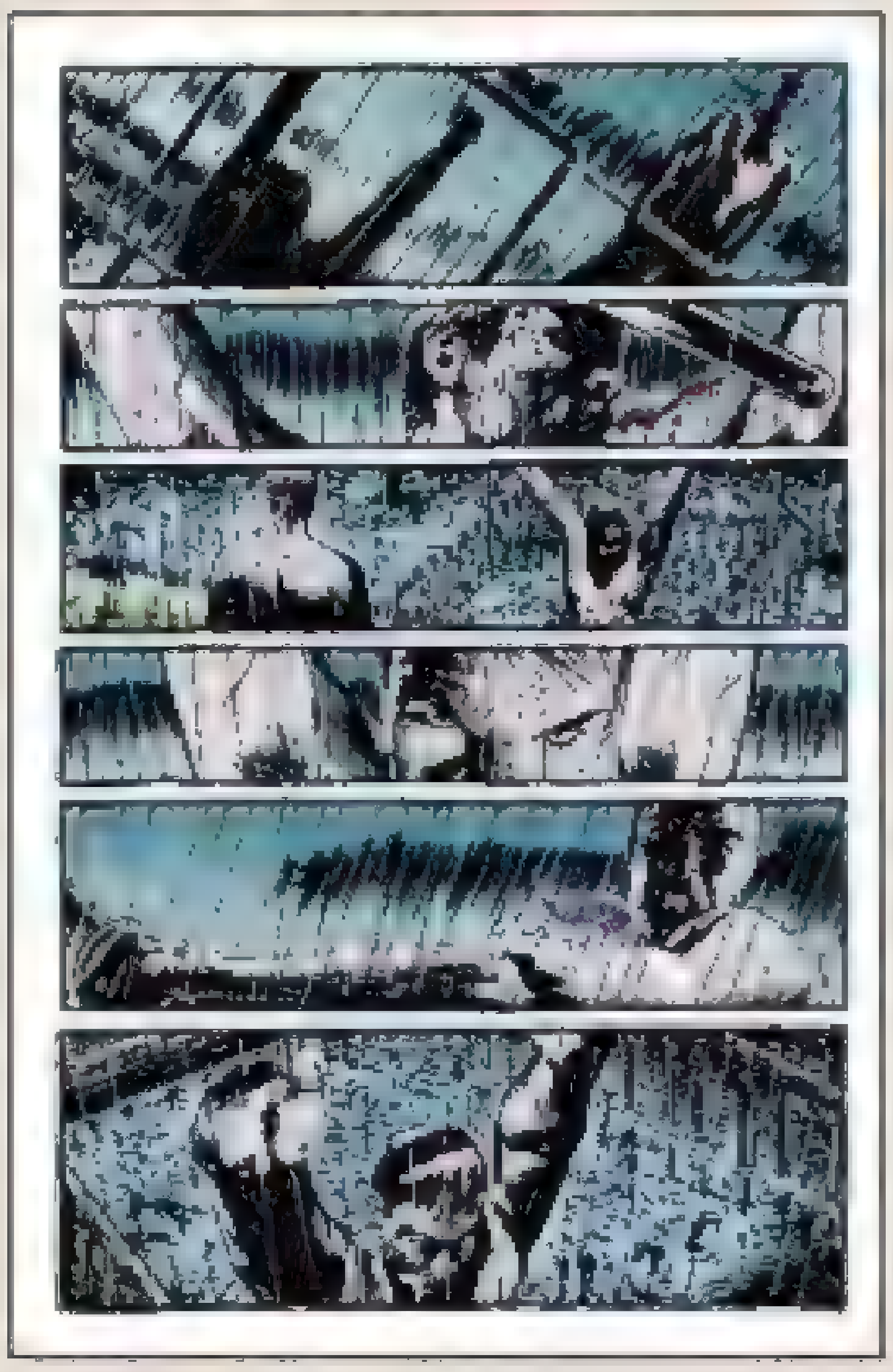
John Higgins: Damn right it does! Or in the early days it did, but now colouring is being treated as the 'third art' in comics, and at times the line between pencil art, ink art and colouring can be completely blurred by what the colourist can do with the computer.

Gary Caldwell: If I was a writer struggling to come up with new concepts, or an artist sweating over sequential narrative, composition, draftsmanship, anatomy and all the little folds that occur in somebody's coat when they bend an arm... I'd be pretty annoyed if the colourist got all the praise. I'm speaking for myself here, but I just waltz in, ice the cake, and merrily waltz back out again. So the answer has to be... no!

Chris Blythe: No one buys a book because of the colourist, but they may well buy it because of the writer, or the artist. There's a hierarchy. Colouring enhances the final work, but the work should stand without it. We're fluffers, pure and simple!

Len O'Grady: Not at all. My job is to make the artist look good and serve the story – everything after that is gravy. As long as my name is on the book, then it's all good.





LEFT: Lee Loughridge gets moody and blue.

ABOVE RIGHT: Len O' Grady tackles the mean streets of *The Circle*

David Baron: No and yes. The company you work for should be rightfully proud to have your name on the cover, right next to the other contributing members of the book, no matter how big or small the title.

Dave Stewart: Sometimes. I think the colourist's work is impacting the book much more than it used to. It would be nice if we were put a little more forward. The art team treated a little more like a team, instead of an assembly line. The success of the art can be as much in the hands of the inker or colourist as the penciller. I tend to get a lot of credit, and I really appreciate it.

Laura Martin: Yeah, it does. Sometimes we get cover credit, but it's really inconsistent, when it should be an industry standard, considering how much we bring to the page. Also, I really wish publishers would include us in their previews listings as part of the creative team. How hard is that?

I do adore the pencillers and writers who give their inkers and colourists the props they deserve in interviews. I still thank Warren Ellis for increasing fans' awareness of my work early on.

Lee Loughridge: Not really, sometimes on a hardcover book, something I really slaved over. But for the most part, I really don't give a shit. I would've gotten into acting if I wanted to be a narcissist.

Q IF ANYONE OUT THERE IS CONSIDERING BECOMING A COLOURIST, WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE THEM?

In which we discover some useful dos and don'ts.

Val Staples: I'd say two of the biggest things are to do life-studying painting and to still learn about pre-press. With the new age of digital comics upon us, pre-press is becoming less and less important. But if you want to have a good printed product, understanding the technical side of things is very important. Plus, it'll help you understand why certain colours print the way they do and how to manipulate that. Printing was also an entry level way to throttle your colour choices. There are many loud and bright colours (specifically greens and purples) that won't print. This was a way to help you dial back on garish colour choices. Digital comics don't have this limitation, but I also think it leads to some ugly colour choices for online comics.

The real teacher is life study. Going outside and painting. You don't have to be good at it, but you still learn a lot. You'll also learn that colours in nature aren't like the names on crayons.

Frank D'armata: Don't have any long term plans to do anything but work. I get constantly flooded with extra stuff that I don't want to turn down, so I usually work six or seven days a week. Vacations are rare unless you plan way in advance, but I wouldn't trade it for the world. I work with the elite among my peers at Marvel. They're my family and friends, and I'll always be grateful for the opportunities they give me.

John Higgins: Learn how to do colour modelling on black line drawings, specifically faces and clothing. Once you master them, everything else is relatively simple. Also concentrate on creating a consistent light source within scenes.

Gary Caldwell: Always be respectful of the artist's work (don't swamp the pages with effects, etc). Get your inspiration and ideas from reality, films and, especially, animation – not just comics. Develop a simple fast technique, and never miss a deadline.

Chris Blythe: The best colourists are the ones who can draw and paint in their own right. They're the ones who understand light and form, theme and tone. There's a difference between telling a story and just colouring in. Something I've been guilty of in the early days was over-powering the line work. You've got to learn to work with it, and drive the narrative in the best way.

Len O'Grady: This one is easy – don't bullshit. If you're offered a gig and know there is no way you can make the deadline, don't blow smoke up your editor's ass and say it's fine. They would much rather be able to put the gig into a safe pair of hands, so it's your job requirement to be those safe pair of hands. Always keep communication open and if you do get into difficulties, make your editor aware and ask for help. In spite of everything you hear, this industry is run by grown ups who want to get the job done on time.

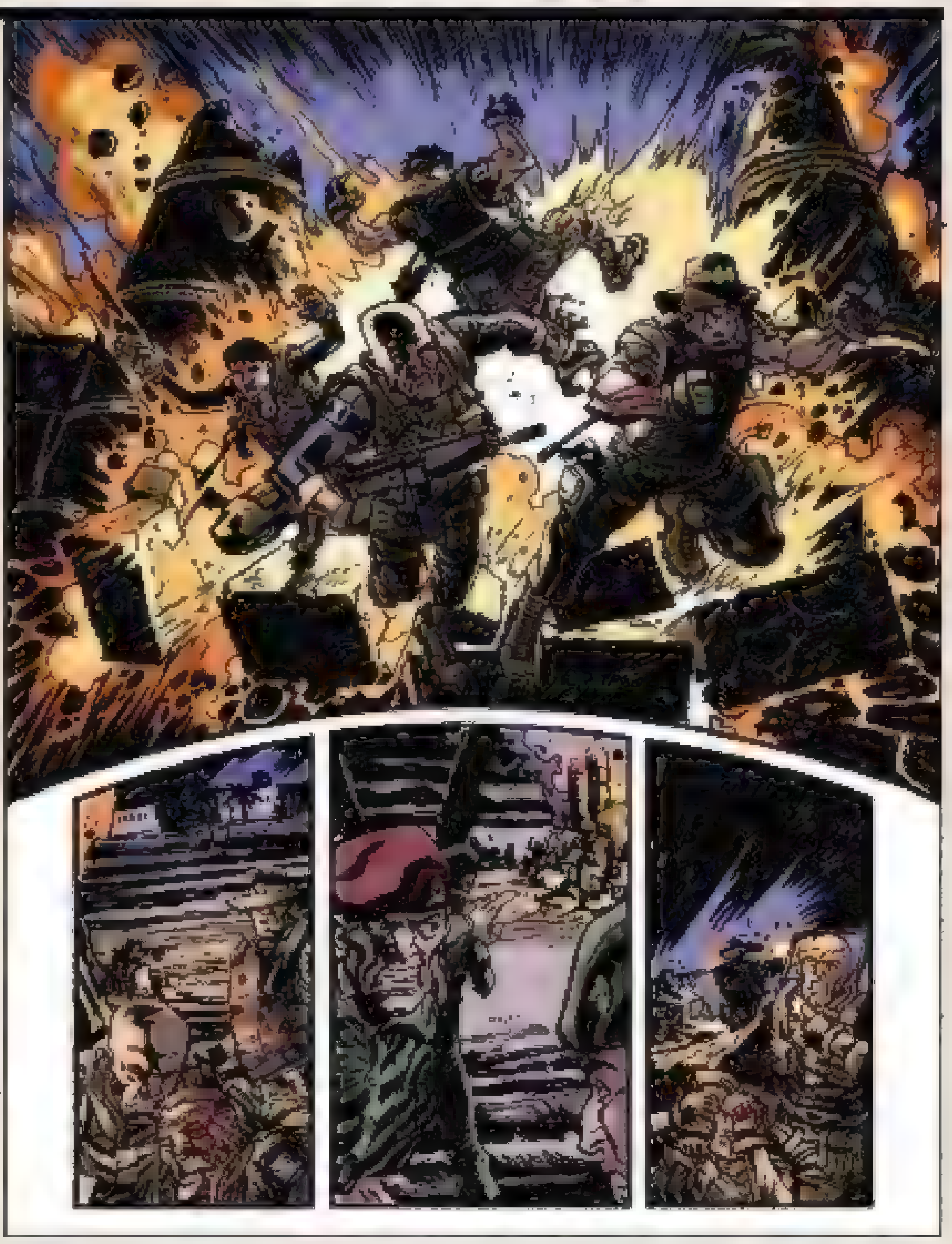
David Baron: Learn both traditional and digital ways of colouring. Be a complete artist and you'll do fine.

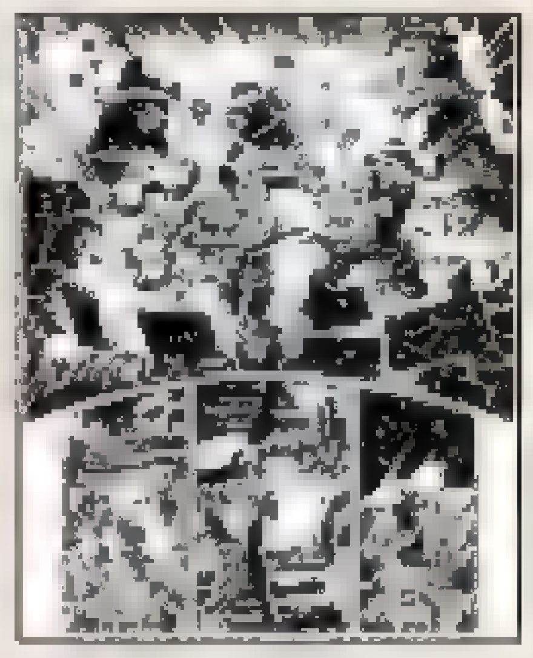
Dave Stewart: Check out all the how tos on the web. GutterZombie.com, etc. Think about clarifying the image and storytelling. Less glitz and more readability. And buy a Cintiq, it's absolutely amazing...

Laura Martin: Learn the basics first: colour theory, anatomy and perspective. Learn the software second, because you're going to have to be really comfortable with it. Don't just mimic what you see in comic books. Learn how to collaborate with other artists and how to work with editors, both on scheduling and on creative input. Learn how to 'read' the line art: there are clues about what the penciller wants you to do. Speed comes later; get your skill level up first, while you're doing those part-time projects. Learn how to pace yourself so that you only have to pull all-nighters when it's absolutely necessary.

If you have the opportunity to join a studio or share an office with another colourist, do it. Being surrounded by other artists is a good thing. Show pencillers your work, not just editors – pencillers have the power to recommend colourists for their projects, even if Editorial has the final say. Learn that you'll have a hard time breaking in; you'll probably be a part-time colourist for a fair while, and there's no definite guarantee that you'll have a book to work on next month.

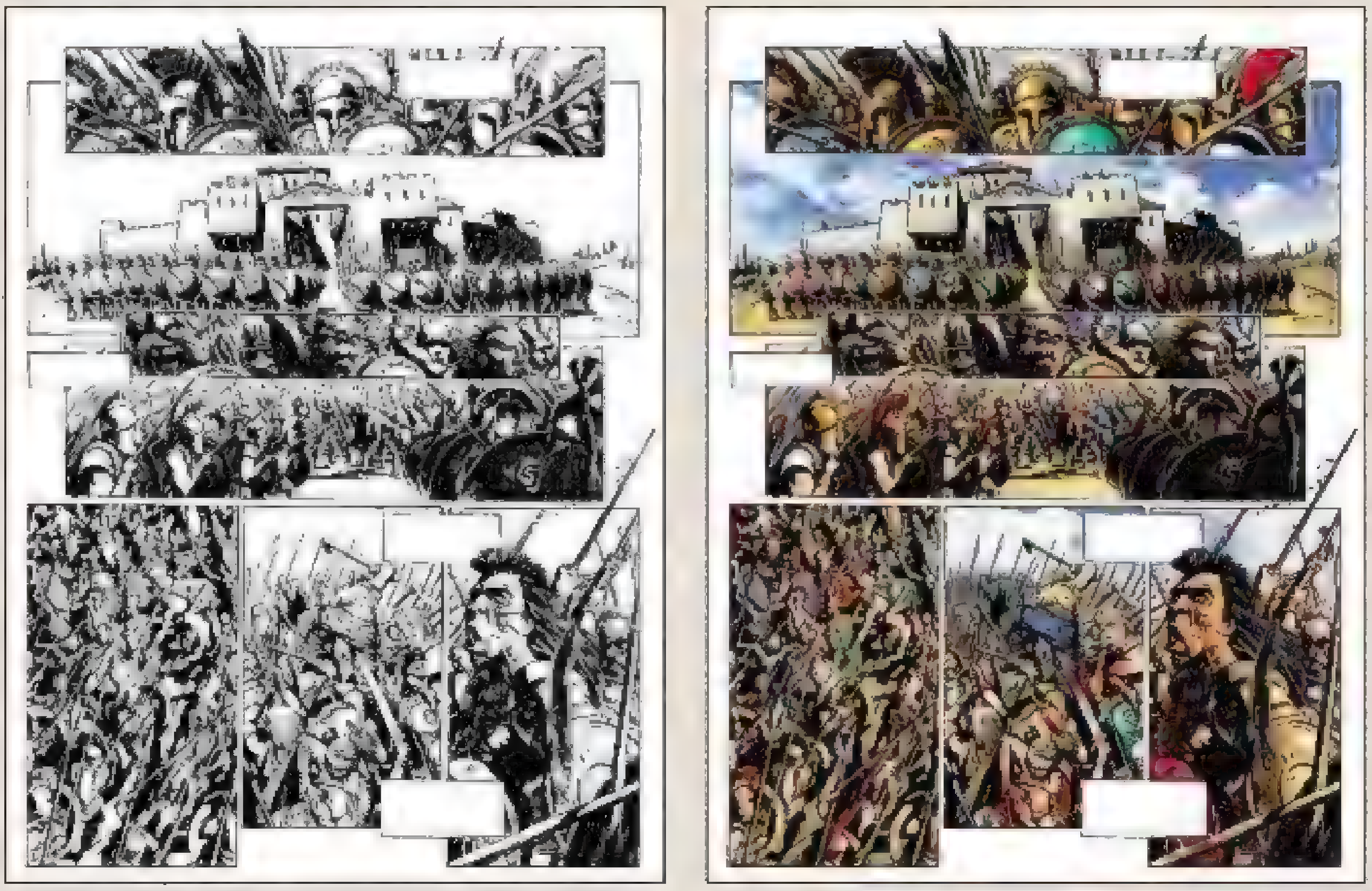
Lee Loughridge: I would say go get a job as a barista at Starbucks and stay out of my house.





ABOVE: Some explosive colour fun from Gary Caldwell - art by PJ Holden

BELOW: Len O'Grady's work on *Keltos* - full of good, clean warfare



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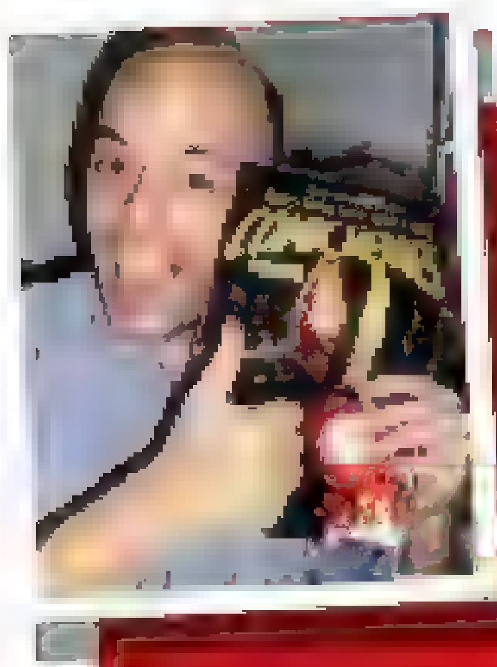

Hello readers!

Well, here we are at issue five of the magazine, and I hope you're enjoying *Comic Heroes* so far. And if you *are* enjoying it, and want to save money *while* you're enjoying it, then why not subscribe? You'll save whole Earth pounds off the cover price, which is certainly not to be sniffed at. Hurrah!

Jes

Jes Bickham
Editor

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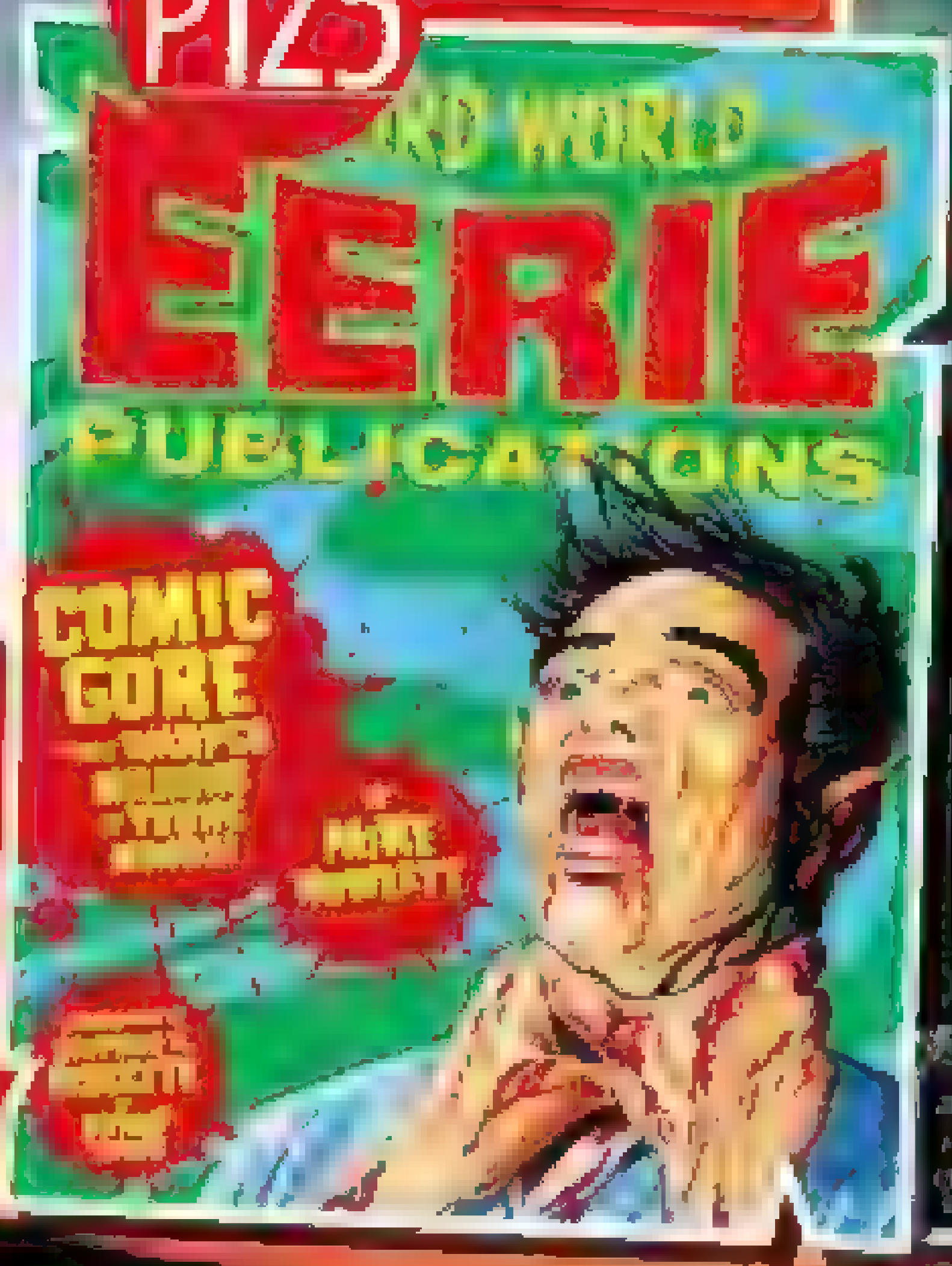

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RATINGS EXPLAINED

Every *Comic Heroes* review is scored out of five stars. Here's what each rating means...

BRILLIANT	★★★★★
GOOD	★★★★
AVERAGE	★★★
PRETTY POOR	★★
RUBBISH!	★

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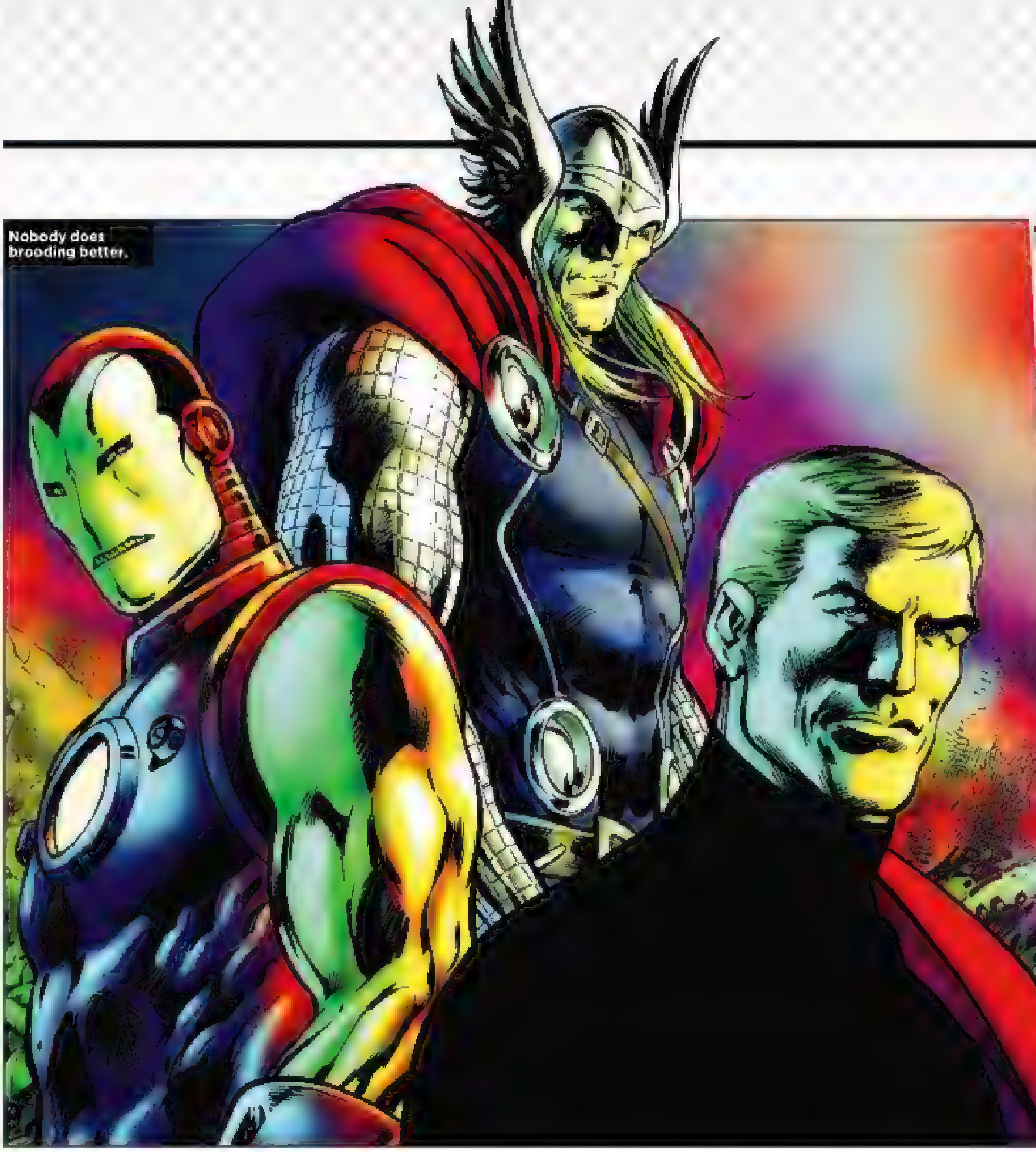


Nobody does brooding better.

BLACK PANTHER
THE MAN WITHOUT FEAR
MARVEL

ABNETT · LANNINI
HEROES FOR HIRE
MARVEL

Kick! Punch! Flame! Ouch.

MARVEL ROUND UP

Our regular look at how the biggest monthly series from the House Of Ideas are shaping up. It's three hits, one miss...

AVENGERS PRIME
WRITER: Brian Michael Bendis
ARTISTS: Alan Davis, Mark Farmer
OUT: Now
★★★★

HEROES FOR HIRE
WRITERS: Dan Abnett, Andy Lanning
ARTISTS: Brad Walker, Andrew Hennessey
OUT: Now
★★★★

BLACK PANTHER: THE MAN WITHOUT FEAR
WRITER: David Liss
ARTIST: Francesco Francavilla
OUT: Now
★★★

OSBORN
WRITER: Kelly Sue DeConnick
ARTIST: Emma Rios
OUT: Now
★★★★★

Since it focuses on Iron Man, Thor and Captain America, *Avengers Prime* is an ideal base for newcomers whose first acquaintances with Shellhead, Goldilocks and the shield-slinger came courtesy of Hollywood.

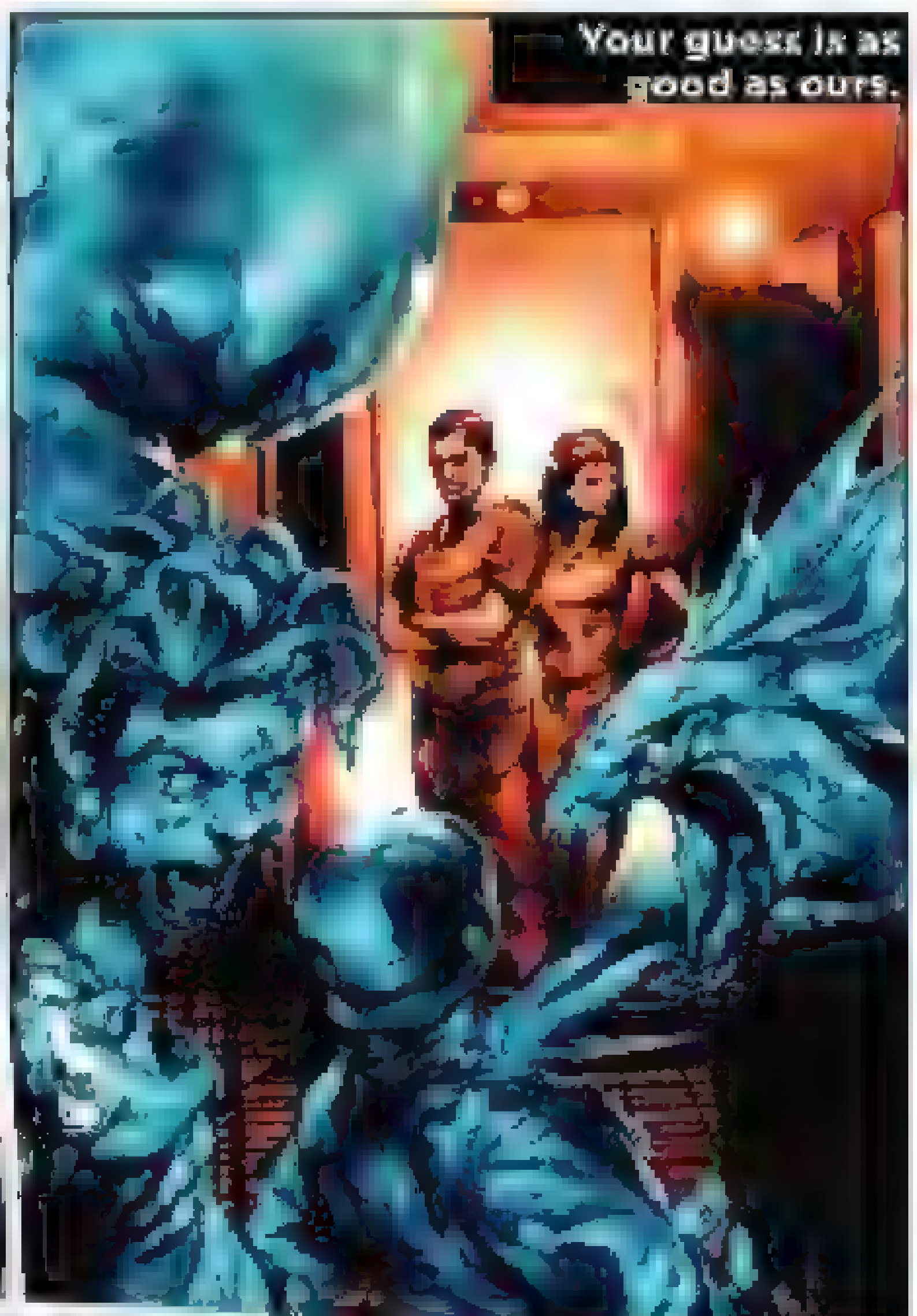
Benefiting from not featuring the cast of thousands that sometimes turns Brian Bendis's other chronicles of our mightiest heroes into chaotic free-for-alls, this five-issue mini-series highlights the relationship between the *Avengers*' three central lynchpins.

Set in the immediate aftermath of the events of *Siege*, the trio are transported to one of the Norse Nine Realms in a storyline that's awkwardly reminiscent of Matt Fraction's ongoing Thor saga. But never mind the continuity, just sit back and enjoy the ride as Bendis whips up an old-fashioned fantasy romp that takes in armies of ogres, the dragon Fafnir and the bewitching Enchantress. You can also marvel at the sumptuous art, produced by Alan Davis and Mark Farmer, which brims with emotion during the tender moments and then lets rip for the highly detailed battle scenes.

After the disappointing *Iron Man/Thor*, Dan Abnett and Andy Lanning are back on track with *Heroes For Hire*, the British duo's first Earthbound Marvel monthly. Excellently supported by Brad Walker and Andrew Hennessey's Paul Gulacy-flavoured art, this reinvention of Power Man and Iron Fist's old mercenary outfit takes its lead from Antony Johnston's enjoyable 'Blood On The Streets'. Three quarters of that *Shadowland* offshoot's four protagonists – Paladin, Silver Sable and Misty Knight – once again join forces. Or do they? All is not what it seems. With shades of DC's *Birds Of Prey*, the apparently no-longer pregnant Misty remotely embroils the above threesome – along with the Falcon, Moon Knight, Ghost Rider and Santana – in a demonic plot that's inspired by David Cronenberg's *Videodrome*. Bloody good fun.

Black Panther: The Man Without Fear #513 also follows on from *Shadowland*, with T'Challa standing in for the missing Matt Murdock as Hell's Kitchen's protector. Making his comic book debut, novelist David Liss brings a sense of pathos to the former Wakanda ruler's interactions with the fellow misfits employed at the neighbourhood diner he now runs.

Out of his natural element, he makes mistakes as he crosses paths with a new underworld kingpin and fellow immigrant,



Your guess is as good as ours.

EVIL INCARCERATED
OSBORN

Would you trust this man? NO.

the ferocious Vlad the Impaler. But too much unnecessary exposition slows the pace, leaving little room for Francesco Francavilla's noir-ish, David Mazzucchelli-inspired art to really breathe.

One series that deserves not to be neglected this year is *Osborn*. After keeping a low profile since being ousted from power at the climax of *Siege*, the former HAMMER boss is found languishing behind bars at the start of 'Evil Incarcerated'.

Insisting that he's a political prisoner and not just a common criminal, he initially resists being sprung by members of a cult that hails the erstwhile Green Goblin as the new messiah.

Previously best known as Mrs Matt Fraction, Kelly Sue DeConnick has conjured up an enthralling tale of political intrigue, journalistic endeavour and ancient South American chimeras. She's excellently supported by Emma Rios's moody, Paul Pope-esque art. If she's not careful, she'll soon be giving her other half a run for his money. Make mine Marvel? Yes please! **Stephen Jewell**

CAPTAIN AMERICA

ULTIMATE CAPTAIN AMERICA
WRITER: Jason Aaron
ARTIST: Ron Garney
OUT: Now
★★★

CAPTAIN AMERICA: THE KORVAC SAGA
WRITER: Ben McCool
ARTIST: Craig Rousseau
OUT: Now
★★★★

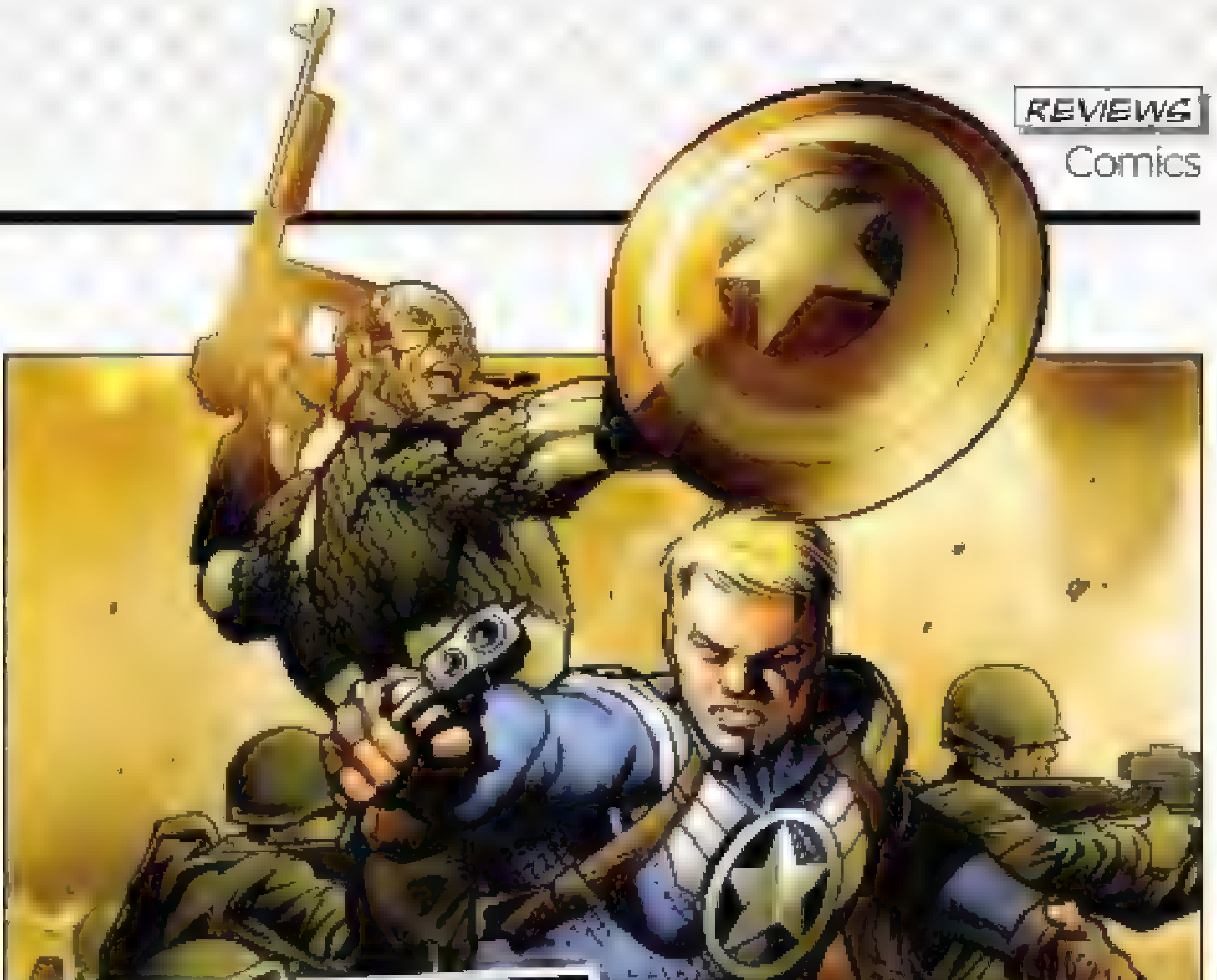
STEVE ROGERS: SUPER-SOLDIER
WRITER: Ed Brubaker
ARTIST: Dale Eaglesham
OUT: Now
★★★

CAPTAIN AMERICA
WRITER: Ed Brubaker
ARTISTS: Butch Guice, Stefano Gaudiano, Rick Magyar
OUT: Now
★★★★★

After swamping the market with Thor titles, it's time for Marvel's 'sentinel of liberty' to take the spotlight. And so we welcome a host of spin-offs and mini-series hitting the shelves ahead of July's Joe Johnston-directed *Captain America: The First Avenger*. As played by Chris Evans, the latest cinematic interpretation of Steve Rogers takes its cue from Mark Millar's brasher *Ultimates* incarnation of the character.

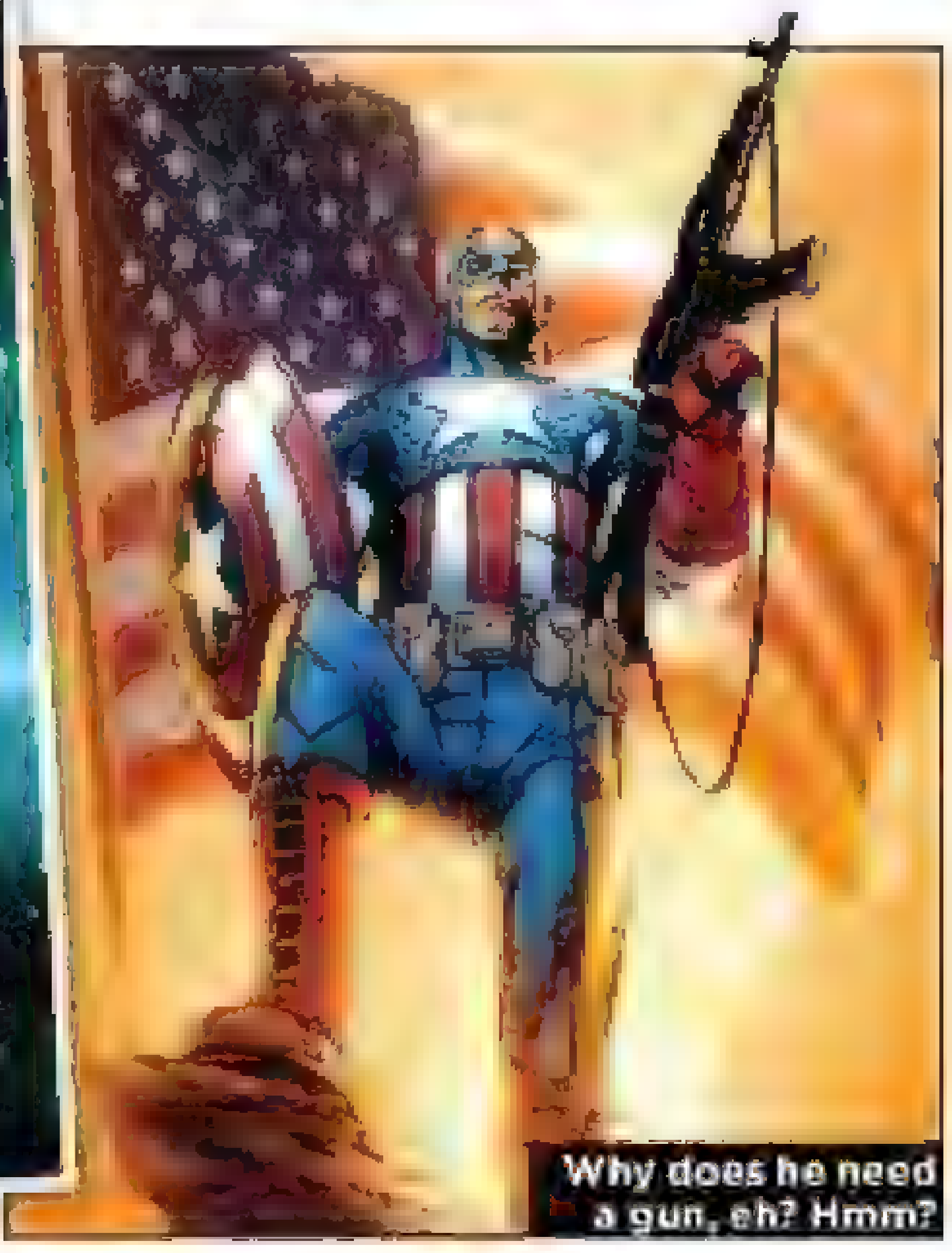
The release of the inaugural *Ultimate Captain America* mini-series couldn't be timelier, although Jason Aaron's cocky, gung-ho Cap has more in common with Wolverine and the Punisher. After a short prologue featuring a captive Cap on the verge of execution, the story flashes back several weeks as he invades a North Korean research facility, where rogue super-soldier Nuke confronts him. The former Vietnam vet made his main Marvel debut nearly two decades ago in the seminal *Daredevil: Born Again*, and Aaron draws some poignant connections between the different eras. The first issue is high on tension, with plenty of widescreen moments in which Ron Garney's cinematic, gritty art can shine.

In contrast, there's an endearingly naive, Jimmy Stewart quality to the alternate-universe Cap of *Korvac Saga*, who's only just escaped from the ice and is hopelessly out of step with the hi-tech 21st century. He starts to question his identity after encountering renegade 31st-century cyborg Michael Korvac, who tantalisingly knows all there is to know about him. Bursting with guest appearances from the Avengers and the Guardians of the Galaxy, Ben McCool's witty script harks back to the classic '70s *Avengers* run in which the original Jim Shooter-written saga was first serialised. At times, Craig Rousseau's cartoony linework seems as though it would better suit an all-ages title, but he boasts a wild energy that's perfect for the breathless script. With Galactus and the Silver Surfer waiting in the wings, the sky isn't the limit for this truly cosmic tale.



We think we prefer the old costume.

CAPTAIN AMERICA
THE KORVAC SAGA



Why does he need a gun, eh? Hmm?

In *Steve Rogers: Super-Soldier* – his first dedicated series since returning to the contemporary Marvel Universe in *Captain America: Reborn* – the original star-spangled Avenger travels to Madripoor to hunt down the manufacturer of a new super-soldier formula.

You have to wonder how much more retconning Cap's origin can take when the wife of Operation: Rebirth scientist Professor Erskine apparently returns from the dead. But regular scribe Ed Brubaker defies expectations with an enthralling tale of subterfuge and mistaken identity, and the Dave Gibbons-esque Dale Eaglesham does a sturdy job on the art.

Former sidekick James 'Bucky' Barnes wielded the shield during his mentor's supposed death, and is still headlining the flagship *Captain America* monthly, at least for now. It might not last much longer, as 'The Trial Of Captain America' finds the former Winter Soldier under arrest for crimes committed when he was a Soviet-controlled assassin.

Thrillingly, Brubaker brings numerous plot threads to a head that he first planted during the early issues of his near six-year tenure, when Bucky arguably made the most unexpected resurrection in comic book history. This means it isn't an easy book to pick up cold, but the author has brought a *Bourne*-style sense of intrigue to the title.

And while incumbent artist Butch Guice's pencils aren't as fluid as his predecessor Steve Epting's, there's a Steranko-like, retro feel to his layouts that fits the cloak-and-dagger atmosphere perfectly. This is excellent work that makes *Captain America* one of Marvel's current stand-out titles.
Stephen Jewell

DARKIE'S MOB: THE SECRET WAR OF JOE DARKIE

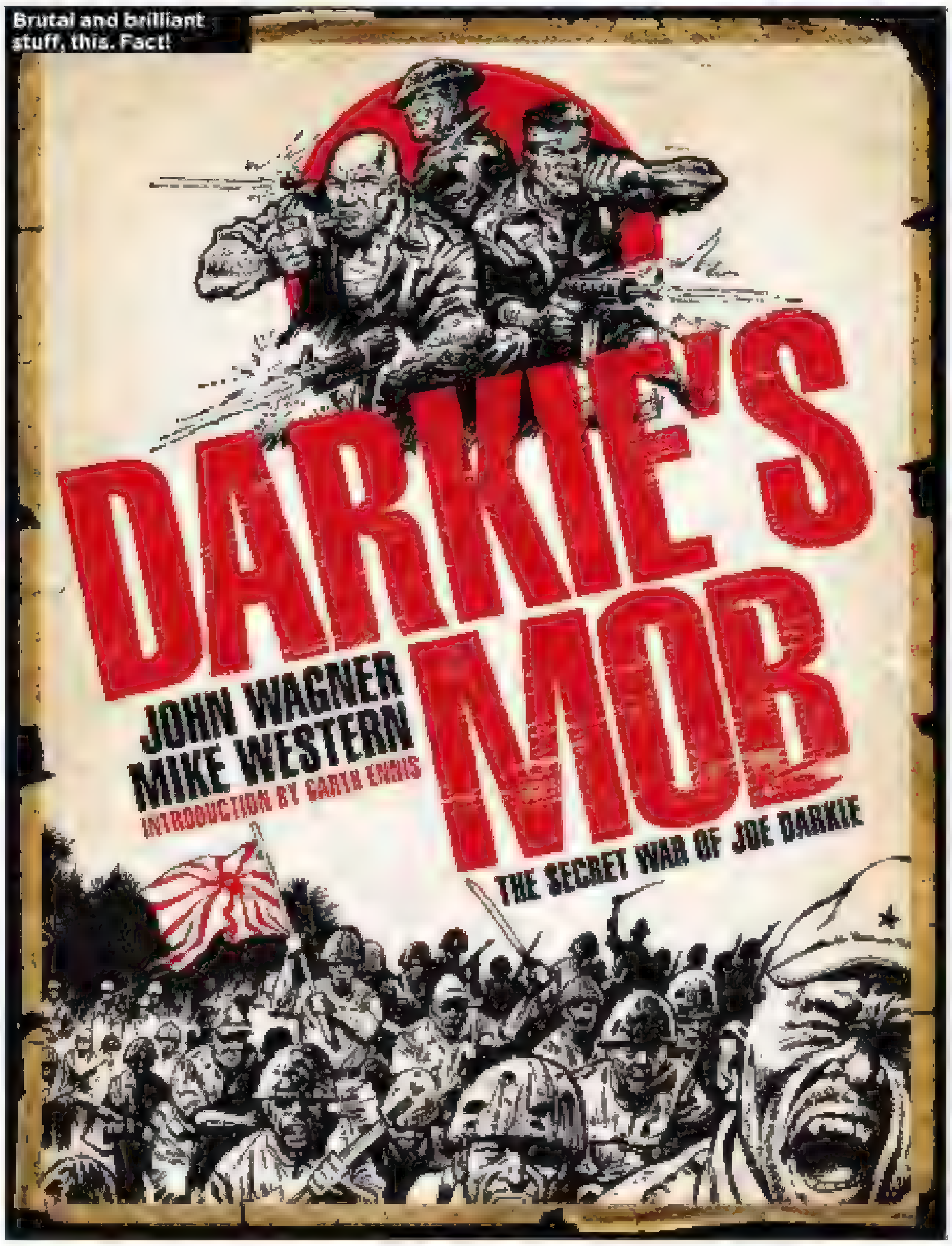
WRITER: John Wagner
ARTIST: Mike Western
PUBLISHER: Titan
OUT: Now
★★★★

The old mantra of 'they were more innocent days back then' may hold true if you're picking up a copy of *Bunty* from 1976, but not when you're talking about one of the classics of British war comics.

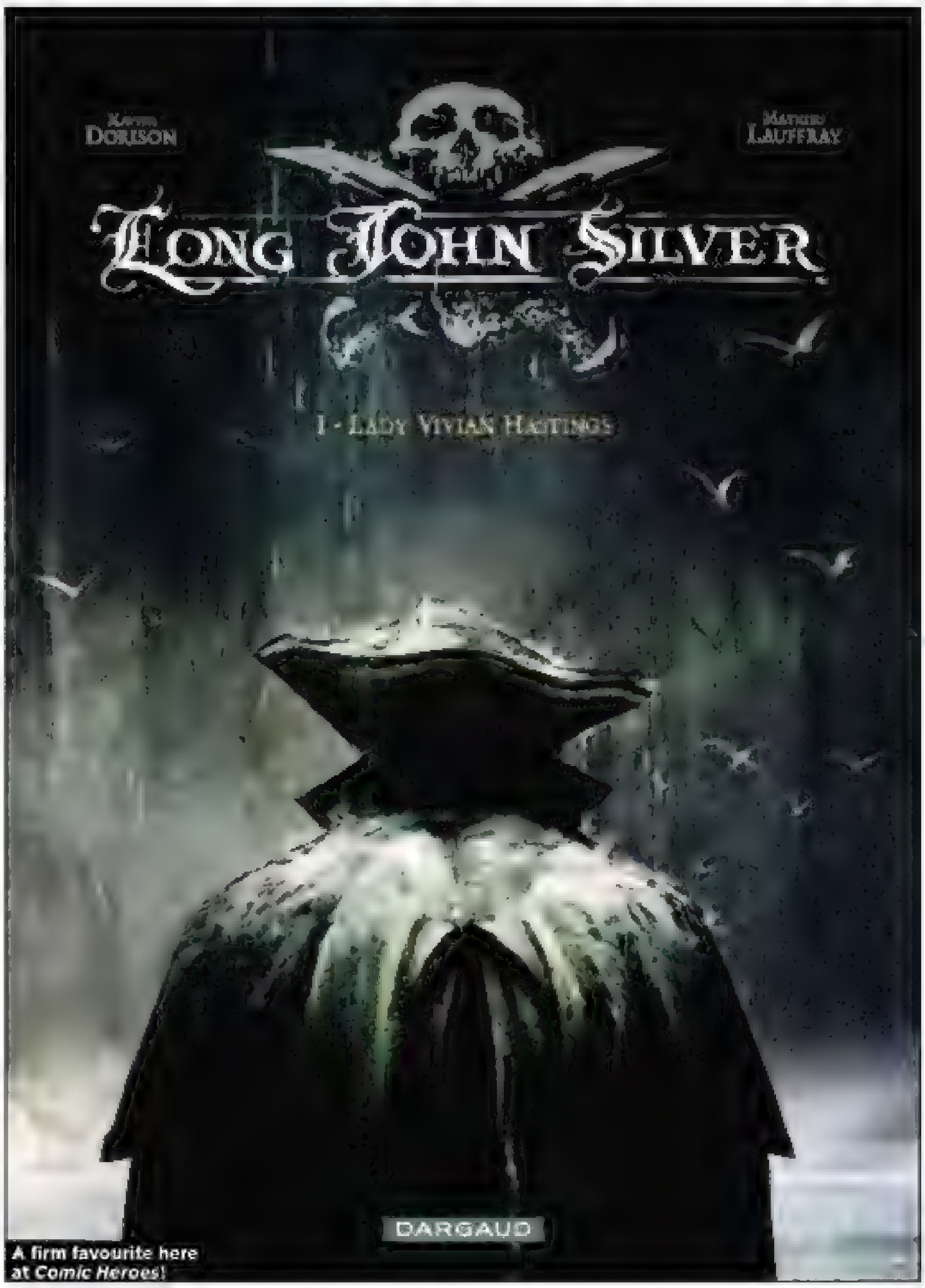
You won't find a more brutal and blood-soaked story than *Darkie's Mob*, John Wagner's violent tale of World War II survival in the boiling jungles of Burma. Originally appearing in *Battle Picture Weekly* from 1976 to 1977, the series follows a band of demoralised and lost British soldiers who find themselves under the command of the renegade, Captain Joe Darkie. With his harsh discipline and hatred of the enemy, Darkie leads the men on an Ahab-like guerrilla war against the Japanese.

Vicious, bloody and belligerent, you can either dismiss *Darkie's Mob* as some kind of case study in British post-war stereotypes, or you can appreciate it as a dark, at times almost comically black, story of the 'Forgotten Army' that doesn't pull punches.

On the surface, the Japanese may sound and look like 1940s propaganda, but – like *Charley's War* – the stories bring to life a conflict that the original readers' fathers and grandfathers may have served in. The language, authentic for the period but eyewatering for the modern audience, won't be to everyone's taste, but this showed John Wagner at a crucial moment in his career when he was already an accomplished writer, but a year or so away from creating his most famous character – Judge Dredd. Plus, Mike Western's art is so good, you'll find yourself practically burning leeches off your legs. **Michael Molcher**



Brutal and brilliant stuff, this. Fact!



A firm favourite here at *Comic Heroes*!

CINEBOOK ROUND-UP

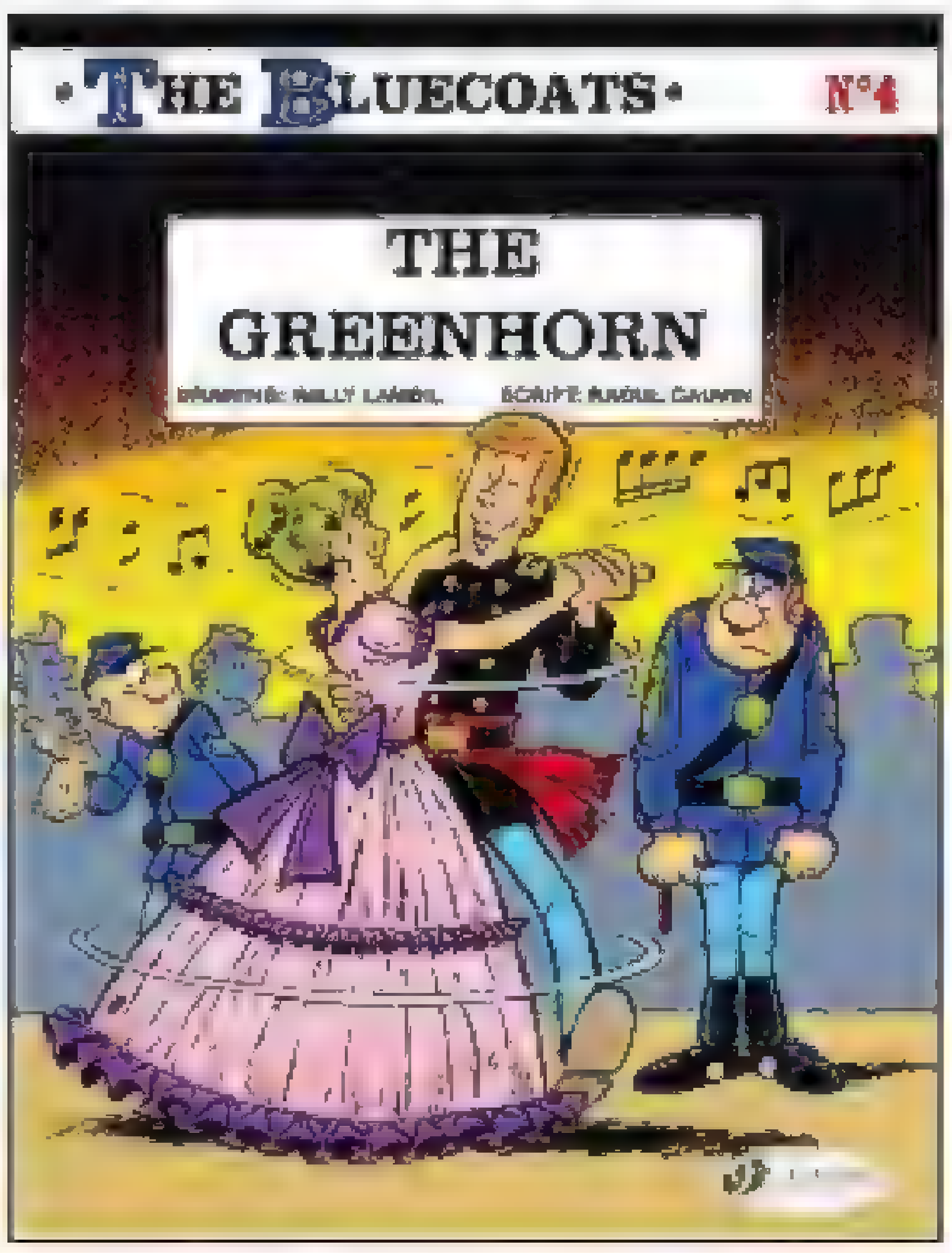
LONG JOHN SILVER #1: LADY VIVIAN HASTINGS
WRITER: Xavier Dorison
ARTIST: Mathieu Lauffray
OUT: Now
★★★★★

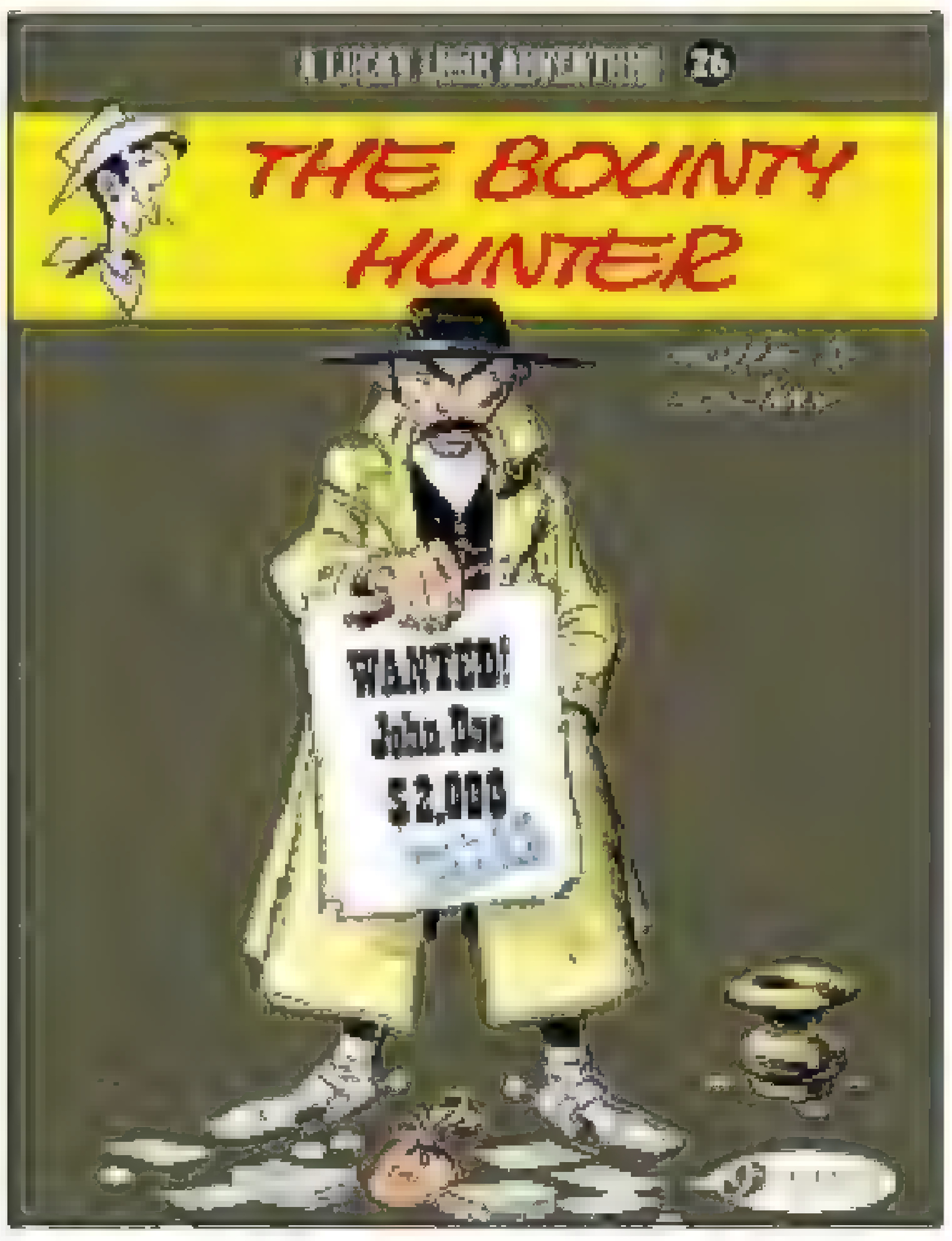
LUCKY LUKE #26: THE BOUNTY HUNTER
WRITER: Rene Goscinny
ARTIST: Maurice De Bevere (Morris)
OUT: Now
★★★★

THE BLUECOATS #4: THE GREENHORN
WRITER: Raoul Cauvin
ARTIST: Willy Lambil
OUT: Now
★★★½

We're big fans of Cinebook here at *Comic Heroes*. Its ongoing mission to bring France and Belgium's biggest and best comics to an English audience is to be applauded: check out the first volume of the fantastic *XIII* covermounted with this very issue for a great example. The latest 'albums' (usually large-format 48-page affairs, around £5.99 each) to reach us are also great indicators of the quality work we so often overlook in our sceptred isle.

First up is the 26th (yup, you read that right!) *Lucky Luke* volume, 'The Bounty Hunter', and for anyone who grew up reading the witty adventures of Asterix, this is immediately recognisable stuff, thanks to both writer Rene Goscinny (who, of course, wrote the *Asterix* books) and the Uderzo-esque artist, Morris. It's a borderline-lunatic Wild West treat, as a glorious cast of eccentrics fall over themselves when a Lee Van Cleef-esque bounty hunter comes to town. Terrific stuff. Similar in tone, although more straight-laced, is *The Bluecoats*, which focuses on two contrasting soldiers in the American Civil War. Unafraid to show the aftermath of



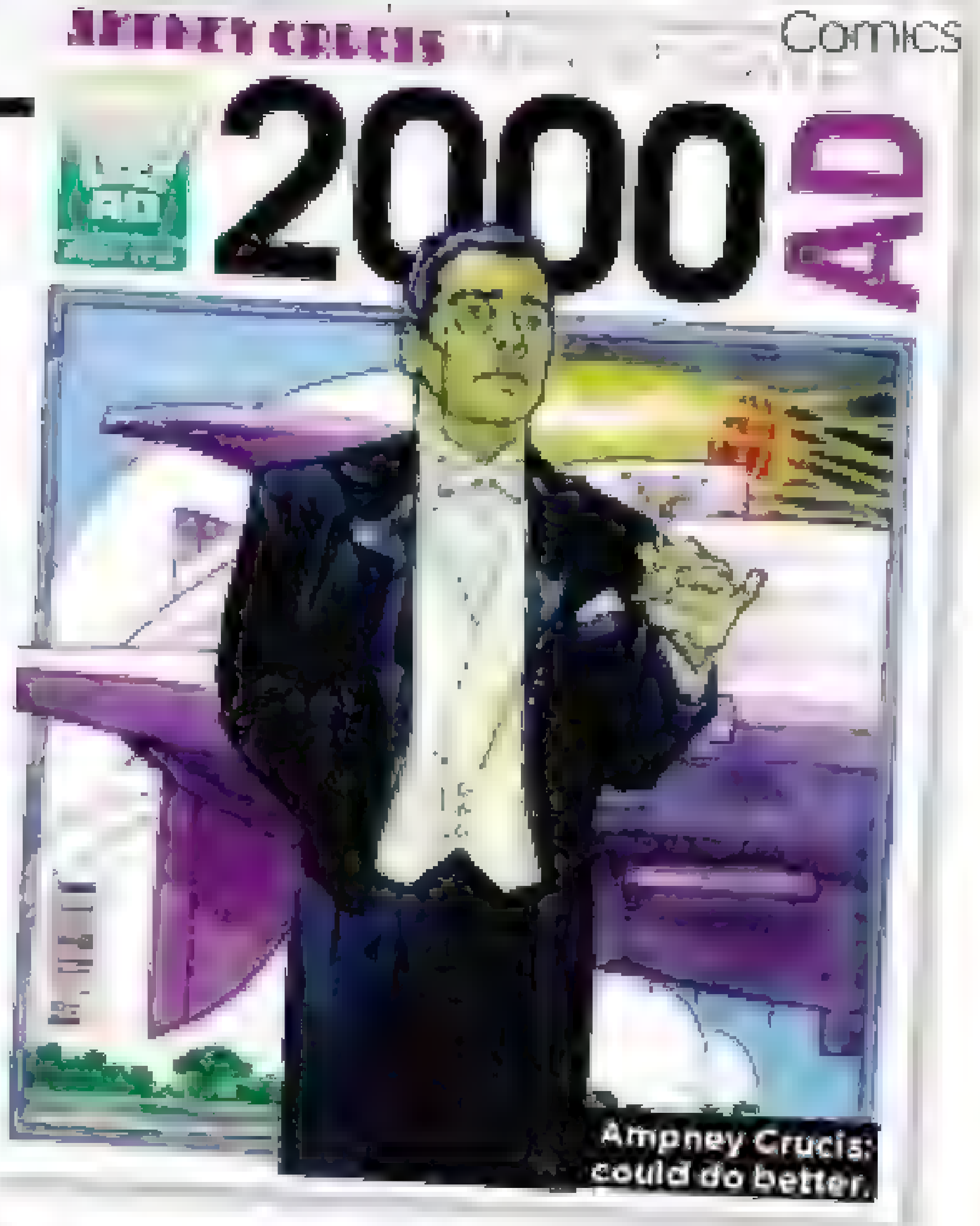


a battle, and happy to poke fun at the shortcomings of those in authority, this is less overtly entertaining than *Lucky Luke* but just as full of substance.

The best we've kept for last. *Long John Silver*, an homage to *Treasure Island*, picks up the story of the titular anti-hero 20 years after Stevenson's tale has concluded, when he's contracted to ferry a dispossessed noblewoman to a fabled lost city at the mouth of the Amazon. Stuffed with memorable players, it's a book that fairly crackles with atmosphere; you can almost smell the brine and the brandy, and Matthieu Lauffray's detailed character work and backdrops make this something to be treasured. The best comics can transport you to another place entirely: *Long John Silver* is one such book, a dark and glittering jewel that's often breathtaking to behold. We eagerly anticipate the next instalment...

Jes Bickham

2000 AD & JUDGE DREDD MEGAZINE



Ampney Crucis: could do better.

2000 AD
WRITERS: Various
ARTISTS: Various
PUBLISHER: Rebellion
OUT: Now (weekly)
★★★

THE JUDGE DREDD MEGAZINE
WRITERS: Various
ARTISTS: Various
PUBLISHER: Rebellion
OUT: Now (monthly)
★★★½

Every so often *2000 AD* has one of its 'jumping on' issues, where all stories start afresh. Theoretically, this means a newbie could hop aboard and not be confused; more likely, lapsed readers will be tempted into giving it another go. What they'll find will entertain them, yes, but will slightly disappoint them too – for the issues since Christmas have been weak. Too many creators have forgotten the all-important formula: strongly visual heroes, black humour, ultra-violence and a cliffhanger every six pages. They've replaced it – yawn – with chat. Here's what we think of the strips...

Judge Dredd: *2000 AD*'s flagship futurecop has just come out of one of chief writer John Wagner's huge epics – a complicated, *The Wire*-like thing – and is now running through a series of one-shots detailing life in Mega City One, a palate cleanser before another main course. The big news is the arrival of new writer Michael Carroll, who seems to have Dredd nicely sussed.

Shakara: Starring a weird, semi-demonic alien who slaughters other, weirder aliens in a strange alien future, *Shakara* has incredible art – Henry Flint is a *2000 AD* great – but is just too repetitive and, at times, confusing to fully work as a *Nemesis The Warlock* stand-in. The quality remains high, but the law of diminishing returns is setting in.

Ampney Crucis Investigates...: A real stinker, this unfunny Agatha Christie parody has poshos getting knocked off on a giant steampunk airship, while a camp, monocle-sporting investigator quips with other talking heads forever. You suspect even the artist is bored; every so often Simon Davis paints someone with blue skin for no reason at all.

Necrophim: Another clunker, depicted in shades of grey, with assorted demons standing around Hell, endlessly posturing and occasionally stabbing each other in the back. There's no-one to care about and little happens; it's the *Alien 3* of comics.

Kingdom: Now this is more like it, a story with clear art, a distinctive hero – Gene the Hackman, a genetically modified man-dog fighting alien bug-monsters – and a proper percentage of catch-phrases, fights and surprises. In its classic years, every *2000 AD* strip was a bit like this.

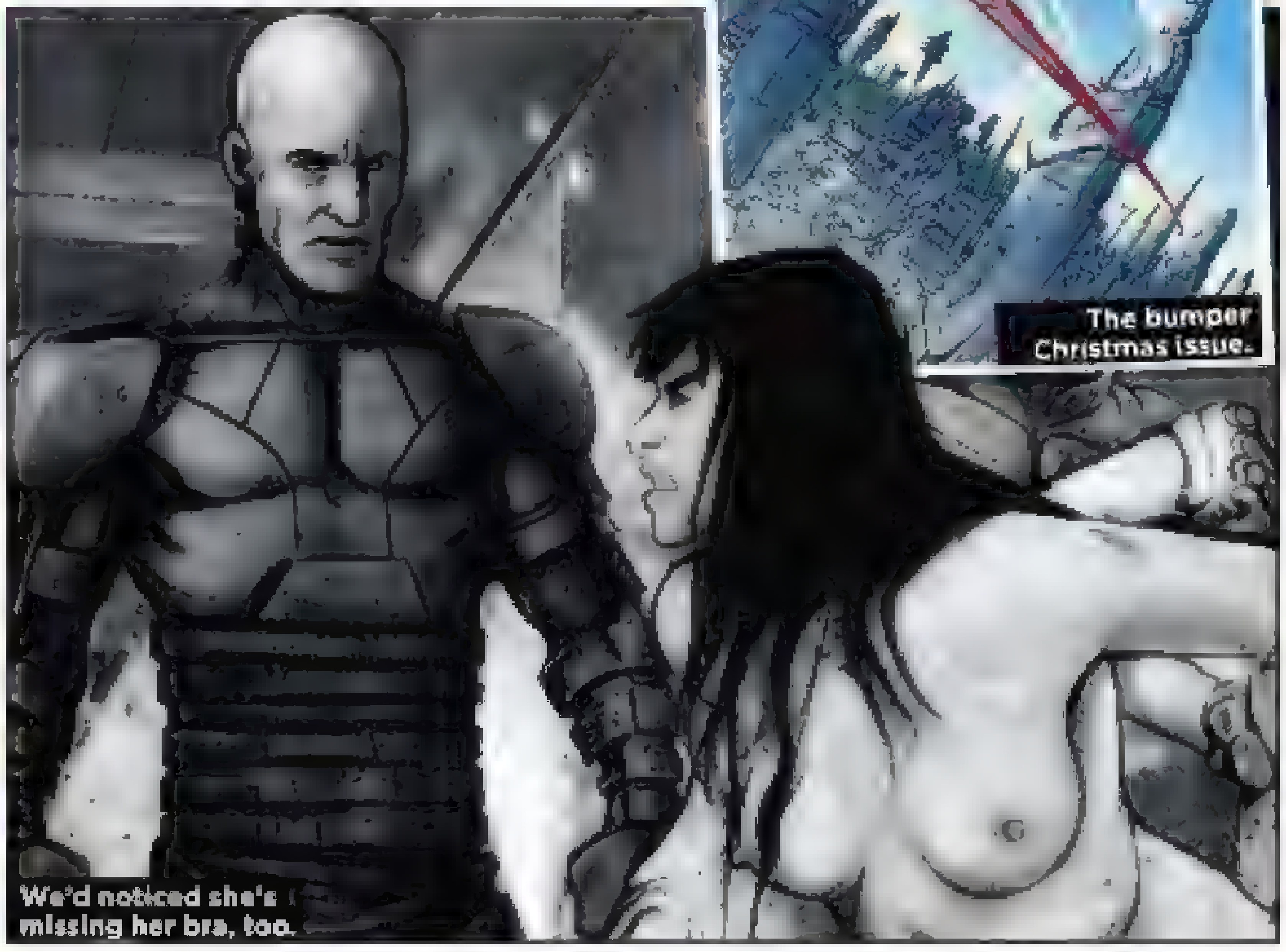
With the mothership treading water somewhat, monthly sister title *The Megazine* looks a more attractive proposition than usual, mixing comic strips with lengthy interviews. Beyond the usual *Dredd* material, the Meg seems fond of lengthy SF adventures, often featuring short-haired, universe-battered female protagonists: Anna Tereshkova in *Samizdat Angels*, Zia Freely in *Insurrection II*, Lilly Mackenzie in her eponymous strip. There's no Halo Jones among them, but the stories move and breathe.

Fred Lyne

LIAM SHARP
JUDGE DREDD // SAMIZDAT SQUAD
JUDGE DREDD
MEGAZINE
TOAST THE REVOLUTION

NUMBERCRUNCHER
JUDGE DREDD MEGAZINE 308
Si Spurrier's ace Numbercruncher.

The bumper Christmas issue.


We'd noticed she's missing her bra, too.

DC COMICS ROUND UP

The best of the monthly single issues from the home of Batman...

STARMAN/CONGORILLA #1
WRITER: James Robinson
ARTIST: Brett Booth
★★★★

STEEL #1
WRITER: Steve Lyons
ARTIST: Sean Chen
★★★

WEIRD WORLDS #1
WRITERS: Kevin Van Hook, Aaron Lopresti and Kevin Maguire
ARTISTS: Jerry Ordway, Aaron Lopresti & Matt Ryan Kevin Maguire
★★★★★

BATMAN: EUROPA #1
WRITER: Matteo Csali
ARTIST: Giuseppe Camoncoli
★★★★

BATMAN BEYOND #1
WRITER: Adam Beechen
ARTIST: Ryan Benjamin John Stanisci
★★★★

ACTION COMICS #897
WRITER: Paul Cornell
ARTIST: Pete Woods
★★★★

GREEN LANTERN #62
WRITER: Geoff Johns
ARTISTS: Doug Mahnke & Christian Alamy
★★★★

BOOSTER GOLD #40
WRITER: Keith Giffen JM Dematteis
ARTISTS: Chris Batista & Rich Perrotta
★★★

JONAH HEX #63
WRITERS: Justin Gray & Jimmy Palmiotti
ARTIST: Jordi Bernet
★★★★

VICTORIAN UNDEAD II: SHERLOCK HOLMES VS DRACULA #3
WRITER: Ian Edginton
ARTIST: Davide Fabri
★★★★★

NEW YORK FIVE
WRITER: Brian Wood
ARTIST: Ryan Kelly
★★★★★

It's a busy month in the DC universe (DCU), starting with a series of tie-ins to *Justice League Of America*'s 'Omega' storyline. These are a perfect chance to spotlight some interesting characters and our two standouts are *Starman/Congorilla* and *Steel*. There's something endearingly goofy about an alien superhero and a giant intelligent gorilla searching for the Fountain of Youth, while the *Steel* special does a good job of showing what makes John Henry Irons different from the heroes he works with, namely his humanity and his willingness to put that on the line.

Weird Worlds also launches this month and is crammed full of wonderful stories. Kevin Van Hook and Jerry Ordway mark the return of Lobo, while Aaaron Lopresti introduces the wonderfully named Garbageman and Kevin Maguire presents a new science fiction character called Tanga. It's a great collection and spotlights one of the DCU's most unique aspects; its willingness to get odd.

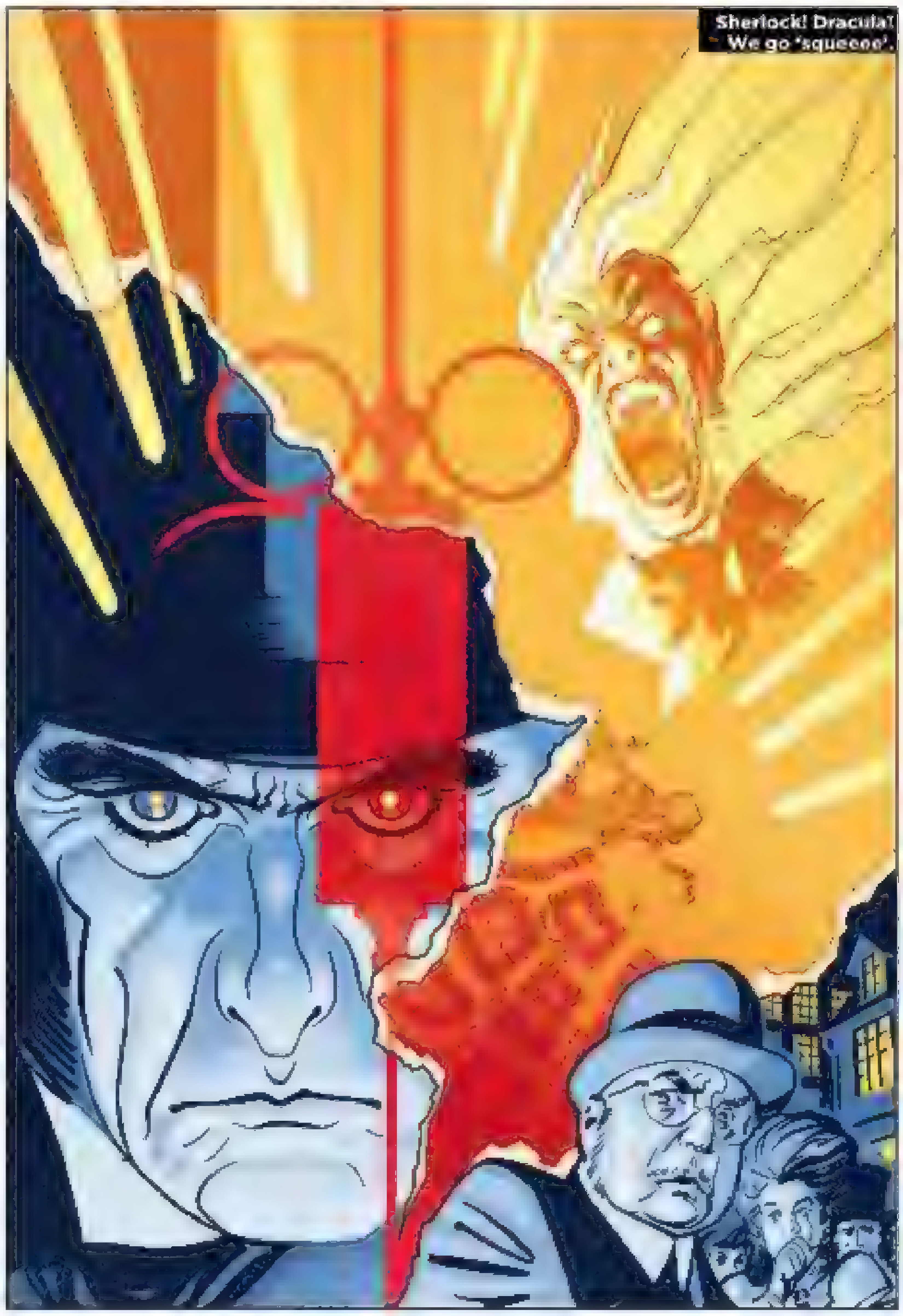
Batman has a big month as well, with Jim Lee returning to illustrate the character in *Europa*. In this tale, Batman is dying of a mysterious virus and the only person who knows where the cure is is the similarly infected Joker. They find themselves travelling across Europe, searching for the cure and trying not to kill each other. It's a beautiful book, and Brian Azzarello and Mateo Casali's script neatly balances the eccentric premise with hard-hitting action.

However, the big Gotham news this month is all in Neo-Gotham! Terry McGinnis finally gets an ongoing series in *Batman Beyond*. The Batman of the future and the entire Justice League travel to Neo-Gotham to bring in a supervillian, only to encounter a problem. He's taken hostages, including Terry's mother... It's *Blade Runner* meets Batman in one of the oddest and most enduring parts of the Bat franchise, and it's a delight to finally see this fascinating take on the character given its due.

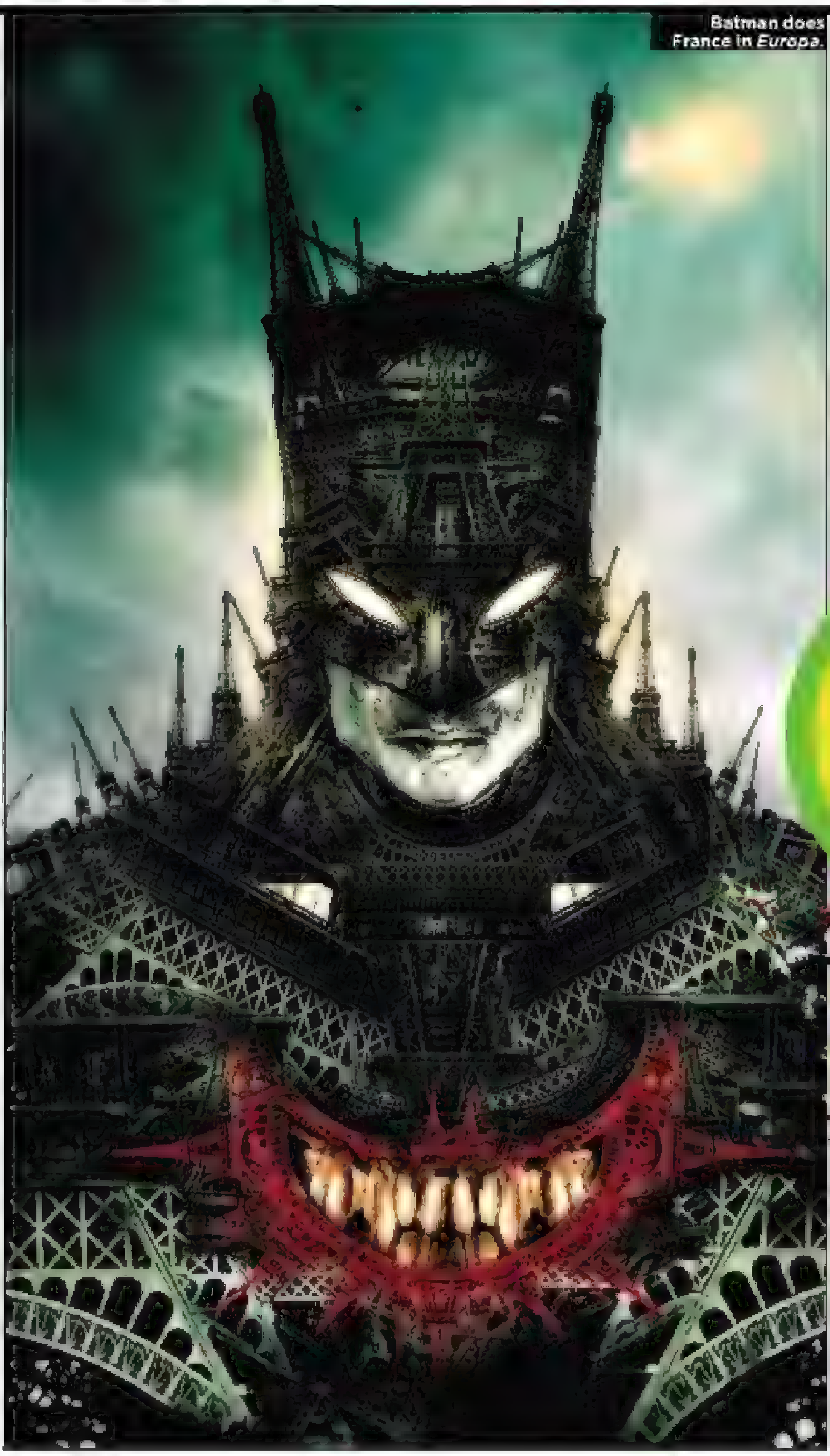
Elsewhere, Paul Cornell's *Action Comics* run has been one of the best in years, placing Lex Luthor front and centre in his quest to find the energy of the Black Lanterns. This issue hits new heights of mania as Lex travels to Arkham Asylum to confront the Joker and find out what he knows about the Black Lanterns. The smartest man in the DCU collides with the maddest in another issue of this fantastic run.

2011 is the year of the Green Lantern and that kicks off with the 'War of the Green Lanterns' story that's set up this month, as Earth's Green Lanterns clash after a Lantern turns against the Corps. There's a nice set-up here, and the fact that the last time this sort of thing happened was with Sinestro gives the story welcome weight. Geoff Johns has single-handedly expanded the Green Lantern mythos into one of the backbones of the DCU and his work is typically impressive here, laying out all the different moral standpoints in the upcoming war and showing once again that it's not easy being green.

The DCU's more left-field books are also having a busy month. *Booster Gold* sees Booster finally come to terms with the death of Ted Kord and struggle to deal with his rage. It's a book that has quietly been doing great work for


Sherlock! Dracula! We go 'squeeee'.

He's green! He's a lantern! Sort of.



Batman does France in *Europa*.

Booster Gold: he's always been a bit of a twit but he's a lot of fun nonetheless.

40 issues. Booster's origin has always skewed towards the odd and the book is still so – a very endearing combination of DCU history, time travel, science fiction and buddy comedy.

Jonah Hex remains one of the DCU's best kept secrets and this month's issue is a perfect example of why. The book's dust-blasted art matches the bleak, savagely humorous story as Justin Gray and Jimmy Palmiotti pit Jonah against Loco, a bounty hunter so vile, Jonah takes a personal interest in his actions. This is a dark book, full of bad people doing bad things. If you can take it, though, there's little better on the market.

There are certain words that, when put in order, have an irresistible power. Some of those words are *Victorian Undead II: Sherlock Holmes vs Dracula*. Holmes, Watson and Van Helsing team up to oppose Count Dracula's nefarious plans for the Empire. Exactly as much fun as it sounds and then much more, it proves Ian Edginton is one of comics' greats. Unmissable.

Brian Wood and Ryan Kelly have consistently been two of the most interesting creators working today and this month they bring *New York Five* to Vertigo. Riley is invisible now her sister's band are making it big, Lona's past is coming back to haunt her and Merissa and Ren find themselves in a very uncomfortable situation involving older men. The four are in trouble, but who's the fifth? Combining Wood's trademark quick wit and cynicism with Kelly's superb artwork, this is a must-have and a second chance to discover another under-the-radar comic. A great series from one of the best creative teams in the business, this is our pick of the month.

Alasdair Stuart

NEMESIS

WRITER: Mark Millar
ARTIST: Steve McNiven
PUBLISHER: Titan
OUT: Now
★★★

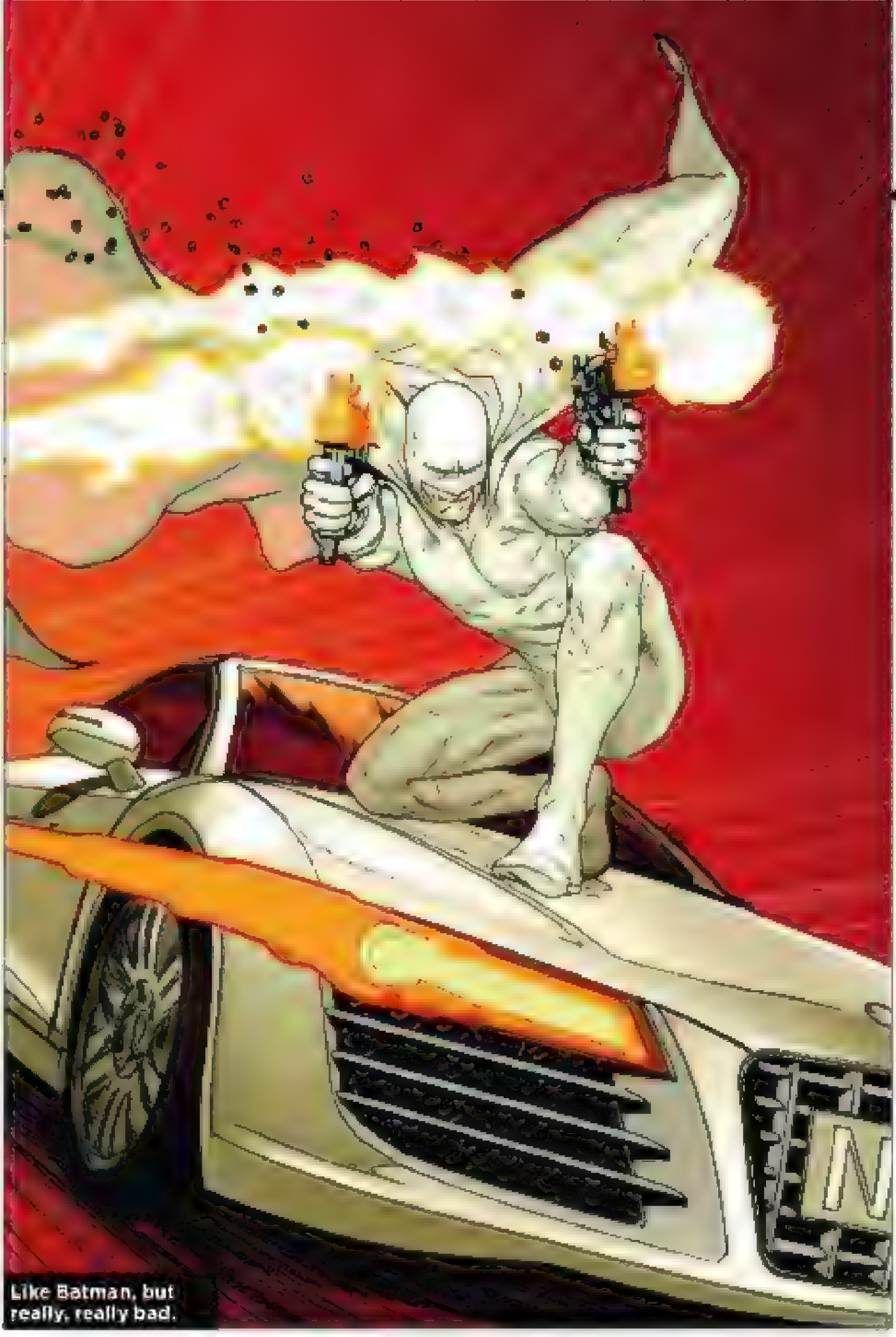
Having registered super heroes in *Civil War* and made them human in *Kick-Ass*, Mark Millar's latest attempts to throw us a curveball, presenting us with the DC-baiting proposition: what if Batman was a total bastard? This four-issue run for Marvel's creator-owned imprint Icon is Millar's attempt to answer his own question with a villain of his own, the shining white crown prince of cruelty, Nemesis.

Appearing in issue one as a cop-killer, Nemesis is essentially what Millar pitched in the first place, a negative Batman. A borderline genius suited up in white with access to all manner of tech and an attitude problem, he's a nihilistic centrepiece.

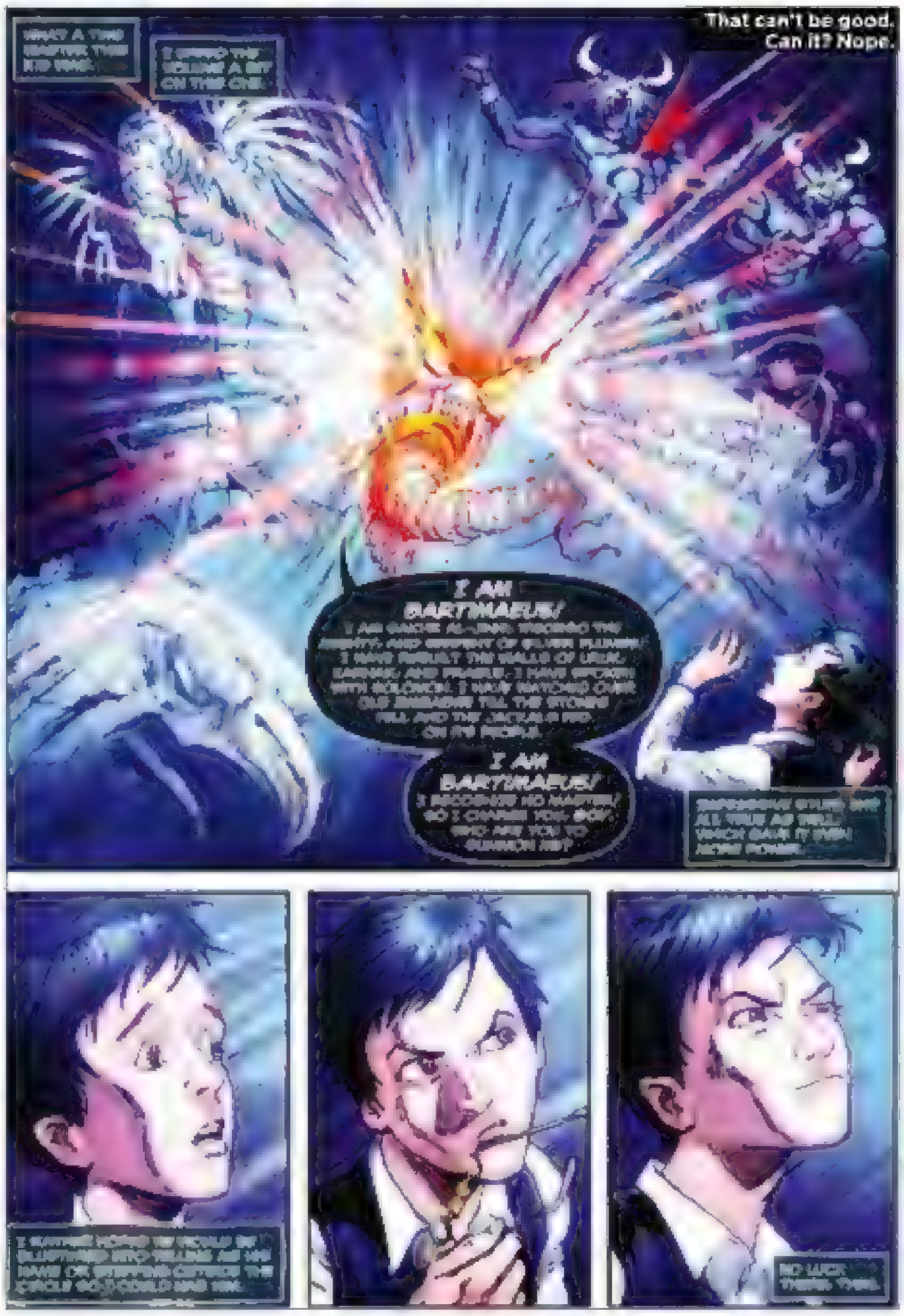
Millar has teamed up with his old *Civil War* art maestro once again, and Steve McNiven's figure work is excellent while his storytelling remains first rate, verging from cinematic in scope to minimalist – some panels lacking background, pulling focus towards the foreground.

There are problems with this all-new eyeball popping lunatic and his latest target, the Commissioner Gordon-a-like Blake Morrow, though. Launched into the story with no real context, you never feel like you get to grip with the main characters. Millar moves things along at such a brisk pace that back stories are blurry at best, and although Nemesis has all the makings of a genuinely menacing super villain, at the end of his first run he remains more of a mystifyingly furious idea than a fully formed superhero slayer.

Rob Power



Like Batman, but really, really bad.


I AM BARTIMAEUS!
I AM BARTIMAEUS!

That can't be good. Can it? Nope.

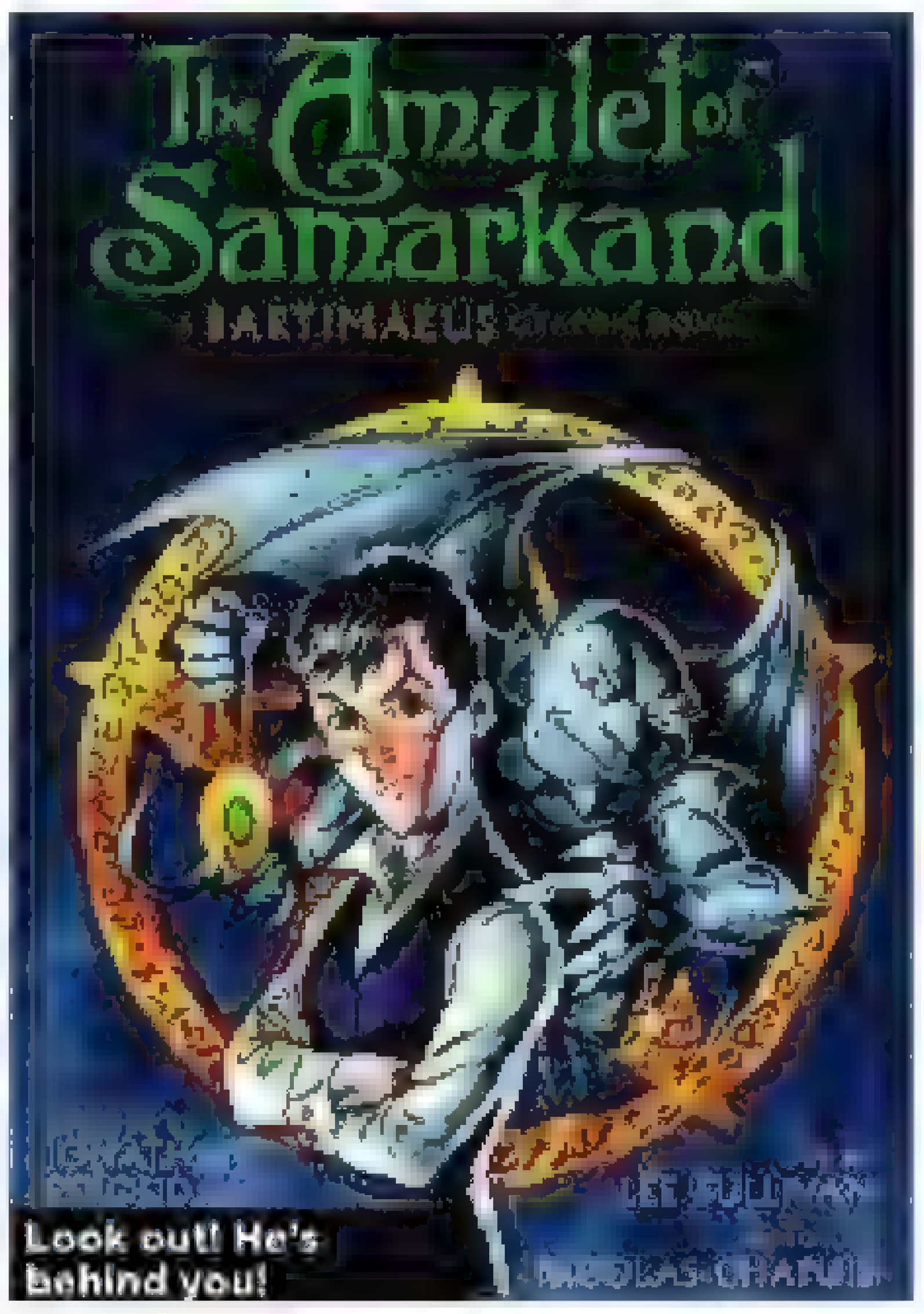
THE AMULET OF SAMARKAND

WRITERS: Jonathan Stroud & Andrew Donkin
ARTIST: Lee Sullivan
PUBLISHER: Corgi
OUT: Now
★★★

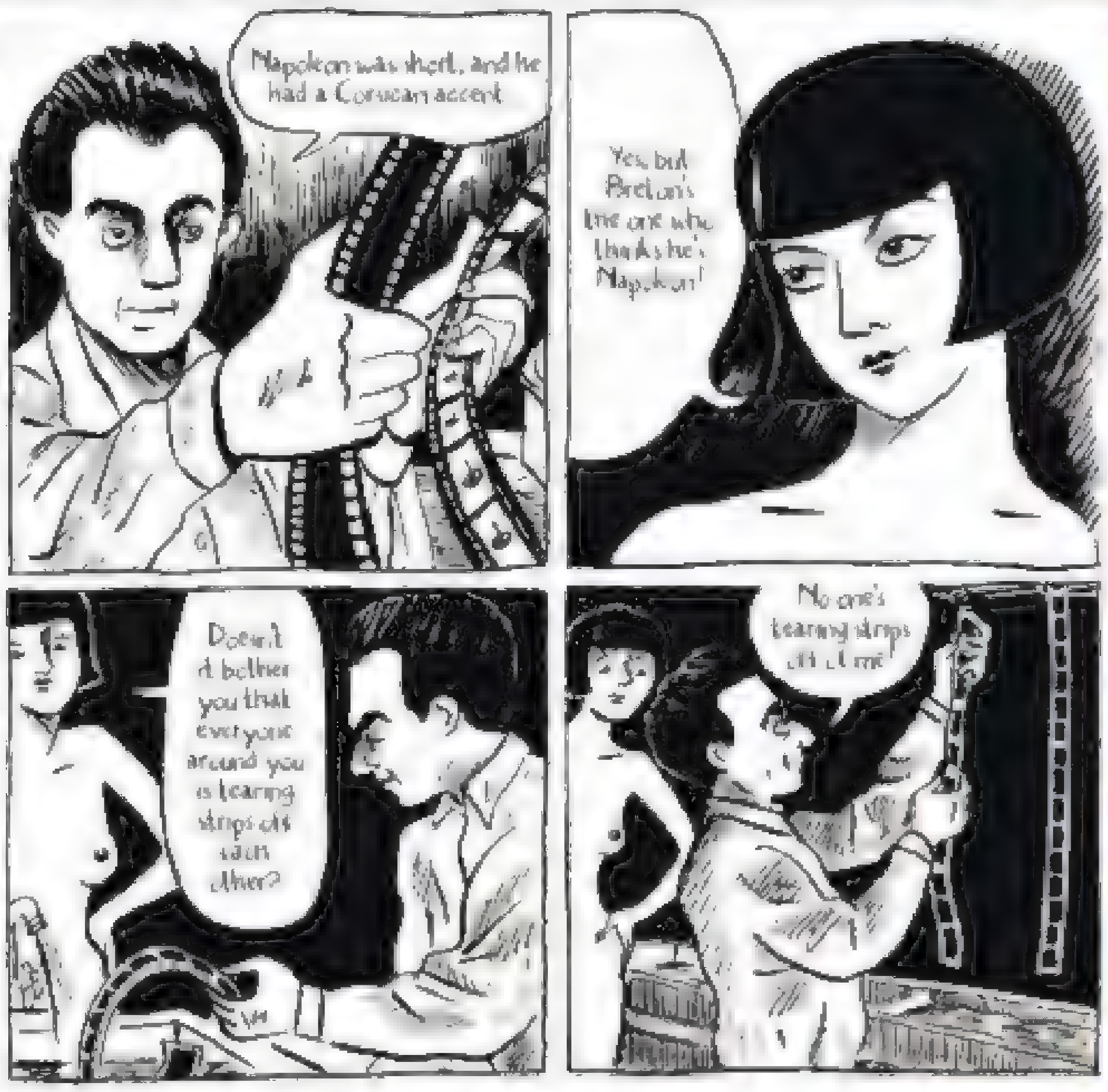
Jonathan Stroud writes kids' fantasy novels, the biggest hits being his Bartimaeus Sequence about a mid-level 'djinni' spirit – one who's snarky and big-headed – in a parallel, lightly-steampunked England ruled by a human magician class. These guys entrap demons to perform impossible feats, and although there are good and bad among them, they're clearly playing a dangerous game: the proles are in near-constant revolt, while the powerful spirits they mess with are rarely to be trusted...

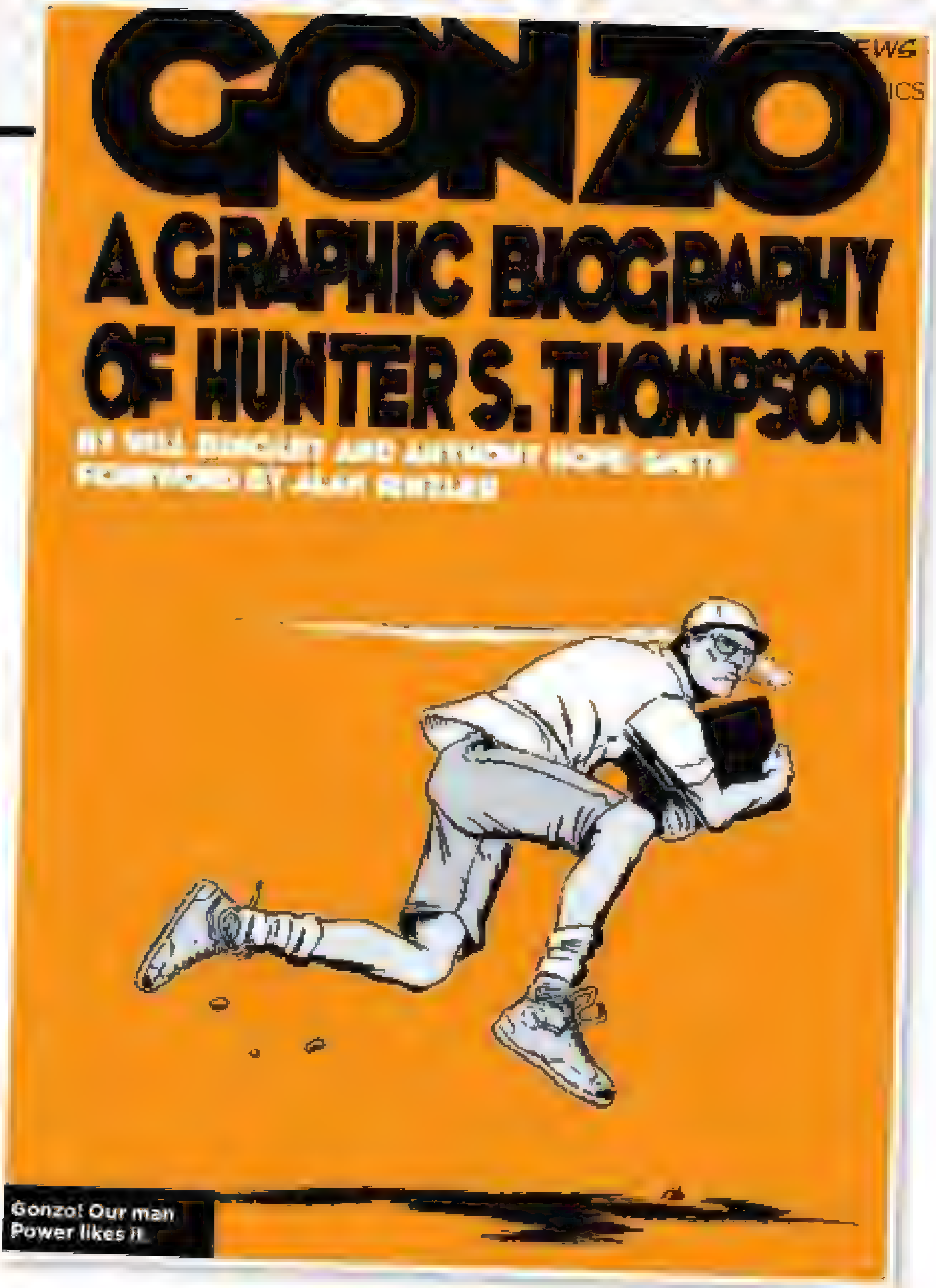
Now adapted as a graphic novel, this first book is told in alternating chapters by Bartimaeus and the tween mage Nathaniel who summons him – the kid is something of a Harry Potter type but with a nastier edge, making him rather hard to root for. It's a fun romp with an intriguing backdrop and plenty of jokes, though a lesser thing to the novels, with their sarky footnotes and deeper characterisation. Sullivan's art is best on buildings and pleasingly cartoony on faces; it's weakest on magical creatures. There are other odd choices going on here too: when your tale is mostly squashed into neatly regimented little panels it's perverse to throw the rare splash away on something as inconsequential as two boys walking across a field.

Matt Bielby



Look out! He's behind you!


Napoleon was short, and he had a Corsican accent
Yes but Breton's the one who thinks he's Napoleon!
Doesn't it bother you that everyone around you is tearing strips off each other?
No one's tearing strips off of me!


GONZO
A GRAPHIC BIOGRAPHY OF HUNTER S. THOMPSON

Gonzo! Our man Power likes it.

SELFMADEHERO ROUND UP

KIKI DE MONTPARNASSE
WRITER: José-Louis Bocquet
ARTIST: Catel Muller
OUT: Now
★★★★

BABY'S IN BLACK
WRITER/ARTIST: Arne Bellstorf
OUT: Now
★★★★

GONZO: A GRAPHIC BIOGRAPHY OF HUNTER S THOMPSON
WRITER: Will Bingley
ARTIST: Anthony Hope-Smith
OUT: Now
★★★★

A pair of monochromatic muses expand SelfMadeHero's graphic biographies range this month, in the form of Catel and Bocquet's *Kiki De Montparnasse* and Arne Bellstorf's *Baby's In Black*.

Kiki tells the story of Alice Prin, the bohemian Queen Of Montparnasse who provided inspiration for countless Parisian-based artists in the roaring '20s. A country girl who finds herself in the middle of Paris' booming inter-war art scene, she is caught posing for an artist and thrown out of home before diving headfirst into the decadent world of the Dadaists. Her larger-than-life personality and seemingly limitless appetite for a bit of good old fashioned shagging sets her apart from the women of her time, and she gains fame and notoriety as the flighty muse of artists such as Man Ray, Foujita and Kisling.

Stretching from 1901 to 1953, the story unfolds through a series of snapshots of Kiki's life. Although the endless processions of lovers, artists and writers can be confusing, Kiki's joie de vivre sparkles throughout. Her evolution from frizzy-haired bumpkin to sophisticated siren and, ultimately, bloated and drug addicted wreck is both beautifully told and frequently shocking.

From '20s Paris to early '60s Hamburg then, with Arne Bellstorf's *Baby's In Black*. The story of doomed proto-Beatle Stuart Sutcliffe and his love affair with German art student Astrid Kirchherr during the Fab's tenure as rock 'n' roll tearaways ripping up the Reeperbahn.

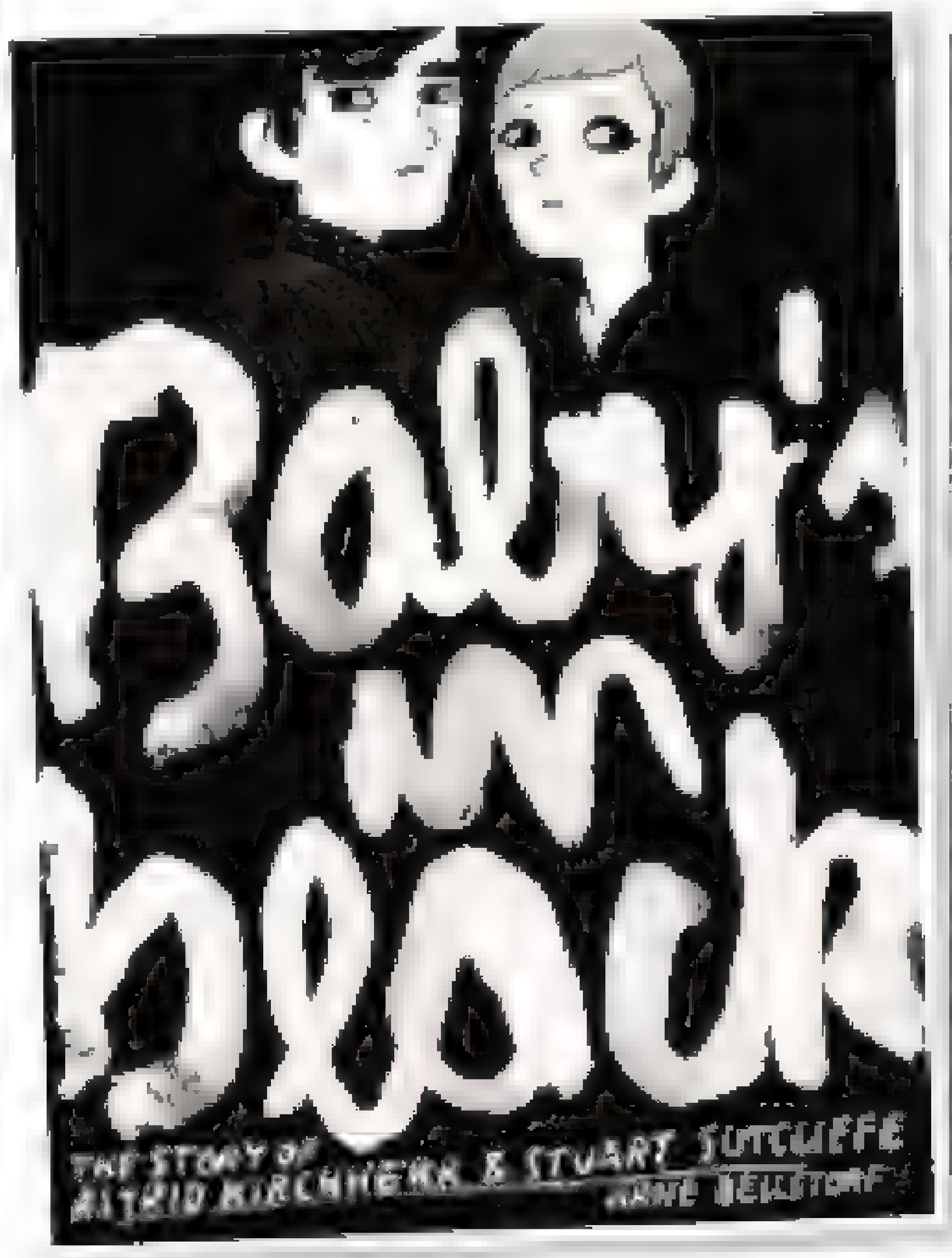
Opening with Astrid's introduction to The Beatles by a breathless Klaus Vormann (the first Beatlemaniac), *Baby's In Black* gives us a front row seat as The Beatles' arty bass player falls in love with the pretty existentialist art student, introducing the group to avante garde ideas, roll neck sweaters and the most famous haircut in musical history in the process.

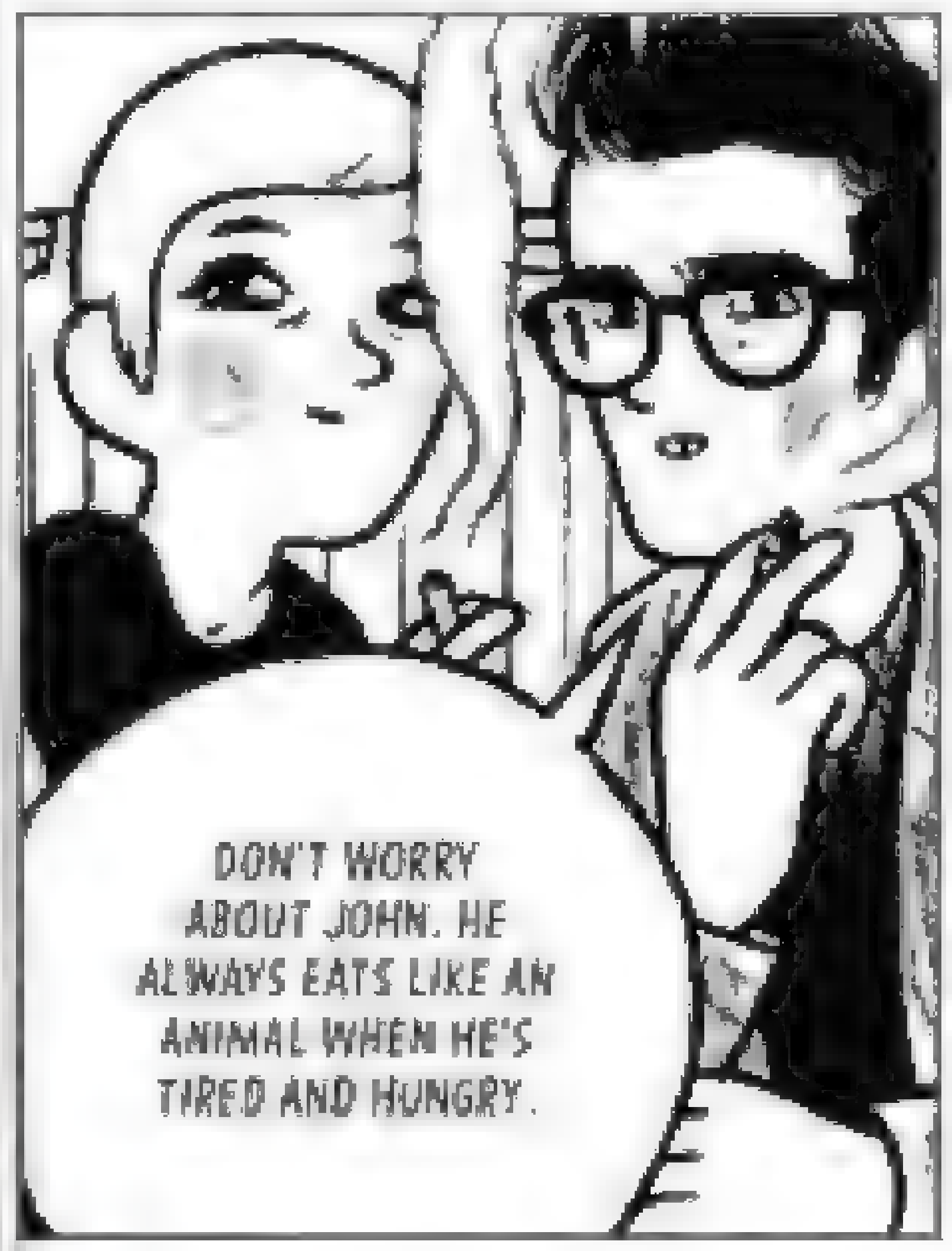
A star-crossed romance rather than *Backbeat* in book form, the youthful flushes of romance are Bellstorf's focus here, writ large over the wide-eyed, innocent faces that populate the pages, all rosy cheeks and chain smoking charm. The attention to detail is superb: the clothes, guitars and haircuts are all faithfully documented, and he gives us a dreary Hamburg that feels like a character as much as a setting.

Yet for a story that has its foundations in the sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll that coloured the Beatles' Hamburg days, this is a surprisingly sexless account. And it's all so awfully nice: there's no trademark Lennon snark, no jealousy or friction as Sutcliffe runs off into the night with his new girl, and the thrust of the story feels unbalanced as a result.

Quibbles aside, *Baby's In Black* is an utterly charming and sweetly fitting tribute to Sutcliffe's legacy and the undoubted impact Kirchhnerr had on The Beatles in their formative years.

Finally, living life at the sort of pace Hunter S Thompson did isn't advisable for your health, but it makes for gripping reading in *Gonzo*. From his early brushes with the law to Hells Angels and the birth of Gonzo itself, Bingley effortlessly captures Thompson's sense of purpose and talent. Splicing his own words with what Thompson left behind gives *Gonzo* an authoritative voice, and Hope-Smith's artwork buzzes with frenetic energy. Showcasing the brutal reality of Thompson's habits (both work and recreational), alongside his obvious dedication for his art, *Gonzo* is a thoughtful, often rousing, ride through the life of one of America's greatest writers. **Rob Power**


Baby's in black
THE STORY OF ASTRID KIRCHHERR & STUART SUTCLIFFE
ARNE BELLSTORF


DON'T WORRY ABOUT JOHN. HE ALWAYS EATS LIKE AN ANIMAL WHEN HE'S TIRED AND HUNGRY.

DAYTRIPPER

WRITERS AND ARTISTS: Fábio Moon and Gabriel Bá
PUBLISHER: DC
OUT: Now
★★★★

While they are best known for collaborating with the likes of Matt Fraction and Gerard Way on *Casanova* and *Umbrella Academy*, Fábio Moon and Gabriel Bá wrote and drew their first forays into comic books, as in seen in Dark Horse's recently republished *De: Tales*. Don't expect any sci-fi spy intrigue or bizarre superheroes in the Brazilian twins' latest collaboration, *Daytripper*. The story of aspiring writer Brás de Olivia Domingos, the self-contained ten-issue series can be read in any order and a new perspective of its poignant themes is gained with this collected volume. From '38' to '76', each chapter is named after Brás's final age as Bá and Moon explore the different courses that his life – and more pertinently, his death – takes. With the ending a foregone conclusion, the emphasis is on the different permutations, as Brás becomes a father, a successful author or a frustrated obit writer. Sometimes, as in #8, which is told by his proud son, he's a distant presence.

After the chaos of *Casanova* and *Umbrella Academy*, the brothers opt for a more traditional layout, which is perfect for the sombre, lyrical tone. From a train travelling across the Brazilian countryside to a rain-sodden São Paulo, some of the individual panels are a beauty to gaze at. A quiet masterpiece.
Stephen Jewell

daytripper
Gabriel Bá
Fábio Moon
Daytripper is a real beauty to behold.

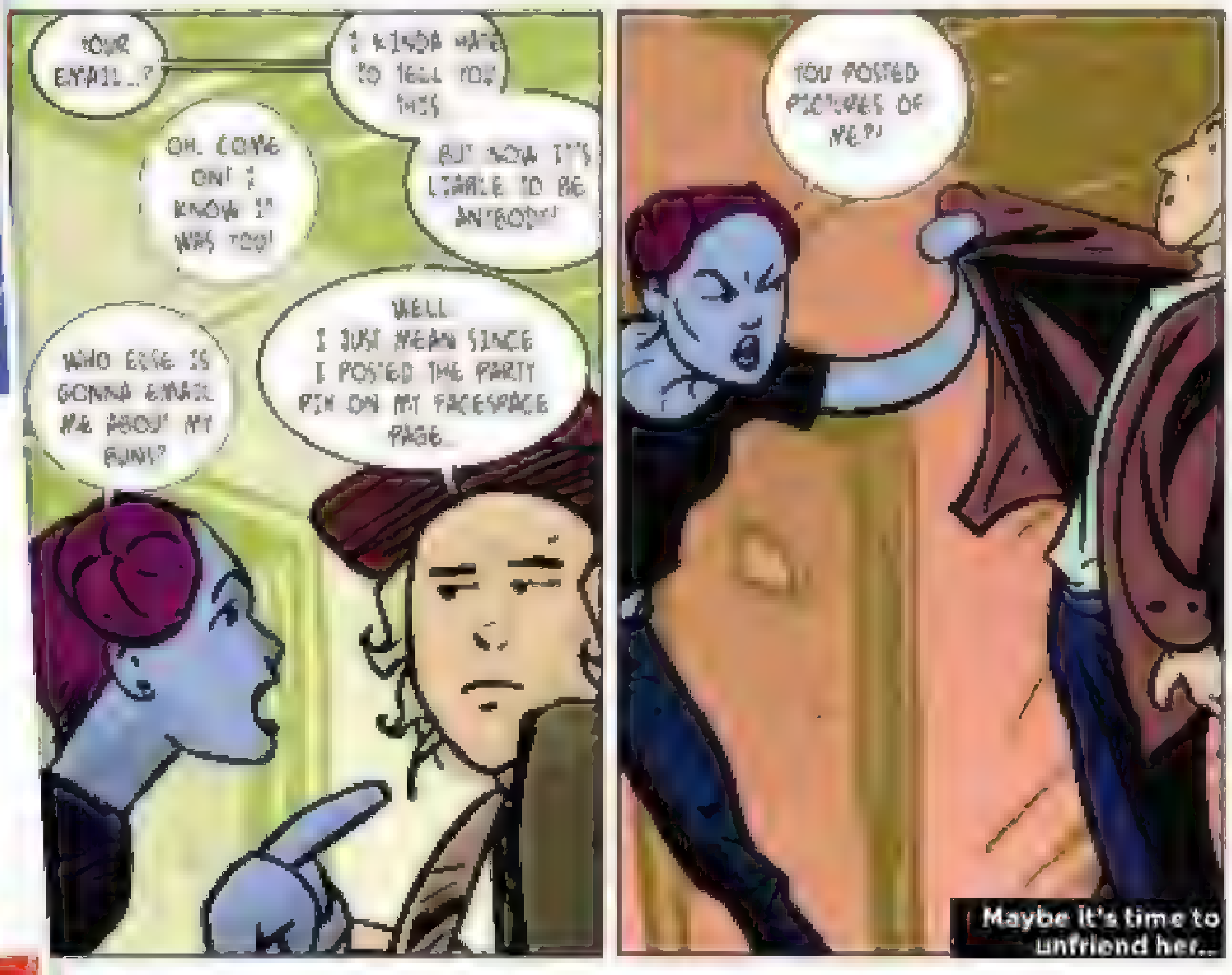
NETWORKED!
CARABELLA ON THE RUN

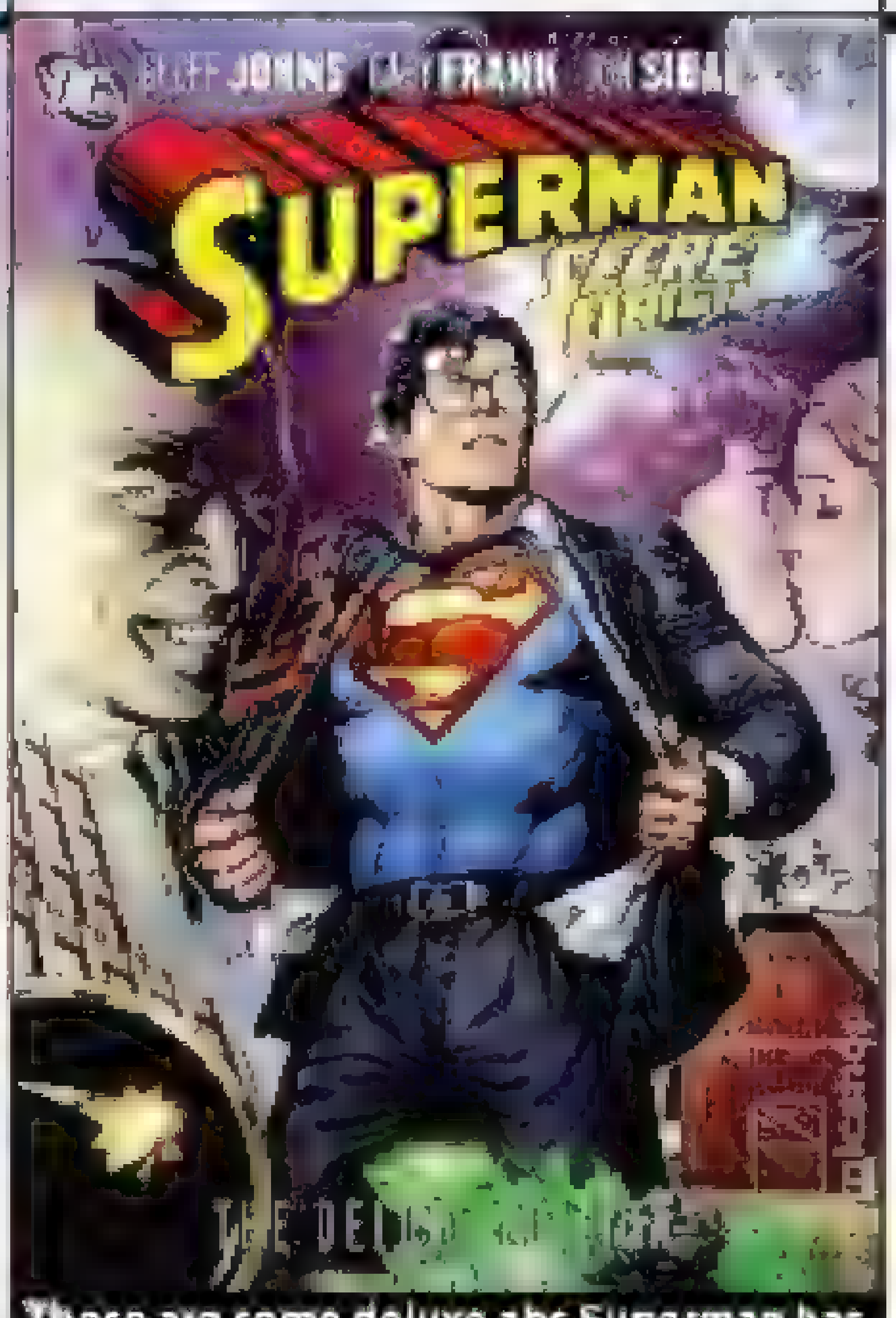
WRITER: Gerard Jones
ARTIST: Mark Badger
PUBLISHER: Privacy Activisism/NBM
OUT: Now
★★½

A blue girl from a parallel world – one of those sci-fi places where a single issue has been blown out of all proportion, like those 'message' planets on the original *Star Trek* – hangs out with San Francisco teens, and watches in horror as they throw themselves into Facebook, email, ATM usage and mobile phones. Is the big brother surveillance culture of her world about to take over here, too?

What could easily be a preachy, silly affair – the Carabella character is owned by an outfit called Privacy Activism, and has appeared in videogames highlighting issues such as digital privacy, identity theft and consumer profiling – is saved by a deft, bouncy, witty script from Gerard Jones (of *The Trouble With Girls* fame) and smooth-flowing, sketchy art from Mark Badger. Yes, it takes a while to get going and becomes melodramatic and goofy towards the end (some of the outrage seems forced, while the alien training-shoe plot is plain loopy), but its heart's in the right place. What solution it suggests isn't clear – never go online? Smash your phone? – but perhaps the point is simply that we should be more informed about what we share.
Matt Bielby

NETWORKED!
Carabella on the Run
GERARD JONES | MARK BADGER


YOUR EMAIL...?
I KINDA HATE TO TELL YOU THIS
OH, COME ON! I KNOW IT WAS YOU!
BUT NOW IT'S LIABLE TO BE ANYBODY!
WHO ELSE IS GONNA EMAIL ME ABOUT MY BUNS?
WELL I JUST MEAN SINCE I POSTED THE PARTY PIX ON MY FACESPACE PAGE.
YOU POSTED PICTURES OF ME?!
Maybe it's time to unfriend her...



Those are some deluxe abs Superman has.

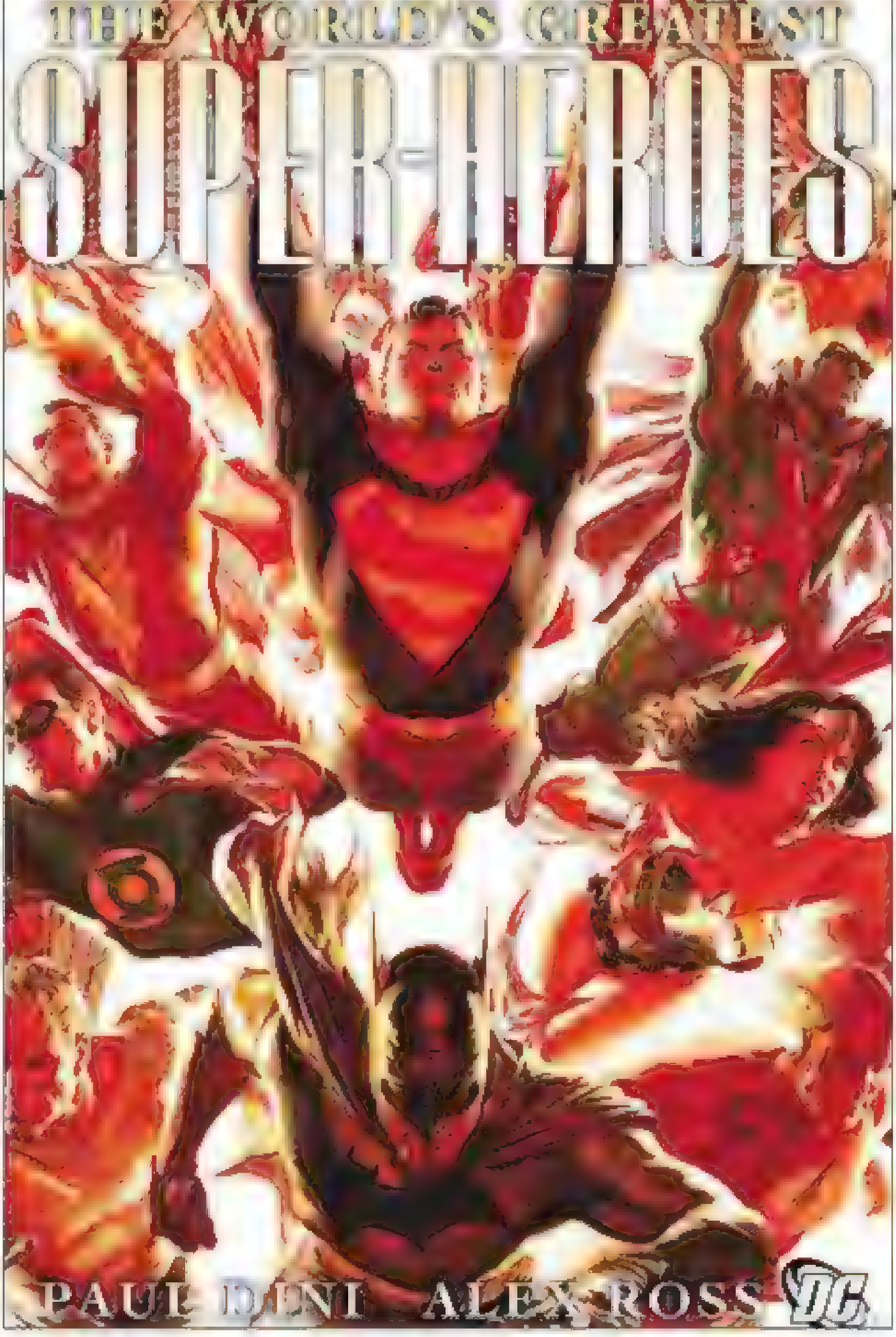
SUPERMAN
SECRET ORIGIN (THE DELUXE EDITION)

WRITER: Geoff Johns
ARTIST: Gary Frank
PUBLISHER: DC Comics/Titan Books
OUT: Now
★★★★

Currently regarded as the definitive origin of the Man of Steel, this latest version from the team of Johns and Frank is a solid and enjoyable, if a little too comfortable, affair.

Notably, Johns dispenses with a Kryptonian opening, instead starting from Clark Kent's Smallville boyhood, indulging some televisual influences – Lex Luthor and Clark know each other in youth – with some Silver Age flourishes such as Superboy and The Legion of Super-Heroes. However, he doesn't stray far: In Metropolis, there's the obvious villain triumvirate of Luthor, Metallo and the Parasite, and Johns explores the theme of Superman not being immediately accepted and having to fend off innate fears of his alien origin.

Johns plot is bolstered by Frank's popular rendition of Superman, clearly based on Christopher Reeve, which lends a warm glow of nostalgia – when Clark rips open his shirt, you'll hear John Williams's theme. There's much to enjoy in his nuanced and dynamic artwork, which unquestionably taps into the iconic. Until the next reality-threatening crisis requires a new origin, this one does the trick in fine style.
Danny Graydon



THE WORLD'S GREATEST SUPERHEROES

WRITER: Paul Dini
ARTIST: Alex Ross
PUBLISHER: DC Comics/Titan Books
OUT: Now
★★★★

While rather earnest and a little preachy, Dini and Ross's six collaborations between 1998 and 2003 – a one-shot each for *Superman*, *Batman*, *Wonder Woman* and *Captain Marvel*, a full *JLA* tale and a collection of origin spreads for the Leaguers – grandly and elegantly support the suggestion of superheroes as modern myths and immovable bastions of morality and hope.

Dini's stories (parables?) remain admirable in their pitting these gods against very real problems (always a dicey area) and their instinctive responses see them decidedly humbled – notably Superman's plan to end world poverty is beaten by human greed, corruption and bureaucracy – ultimately forcing them to think on a much smaller scale with long-term gain, somewhat refreshing given the fast and furious immediacy of the genre.

Of course, the real star of the show was Ross's painted photo-realist artwork, which remains both magnificent and, at times, truly breathtaking. Even in this smaller format – the originals were oversized Treasury editions – the pages teem with striking imagery and, in *JLA: Liberty And Justice*'s many action sequences, it's like viewing storyboards for the greatest superhero movie you'll never see. A forthright nod to the classical rather than grim 'n' gritty, Dini and Ross serve potent reminders of these character's core ability to inspire.

Danny Graydon

USAGI YOJIMBO
THE SPECIAL EDITION

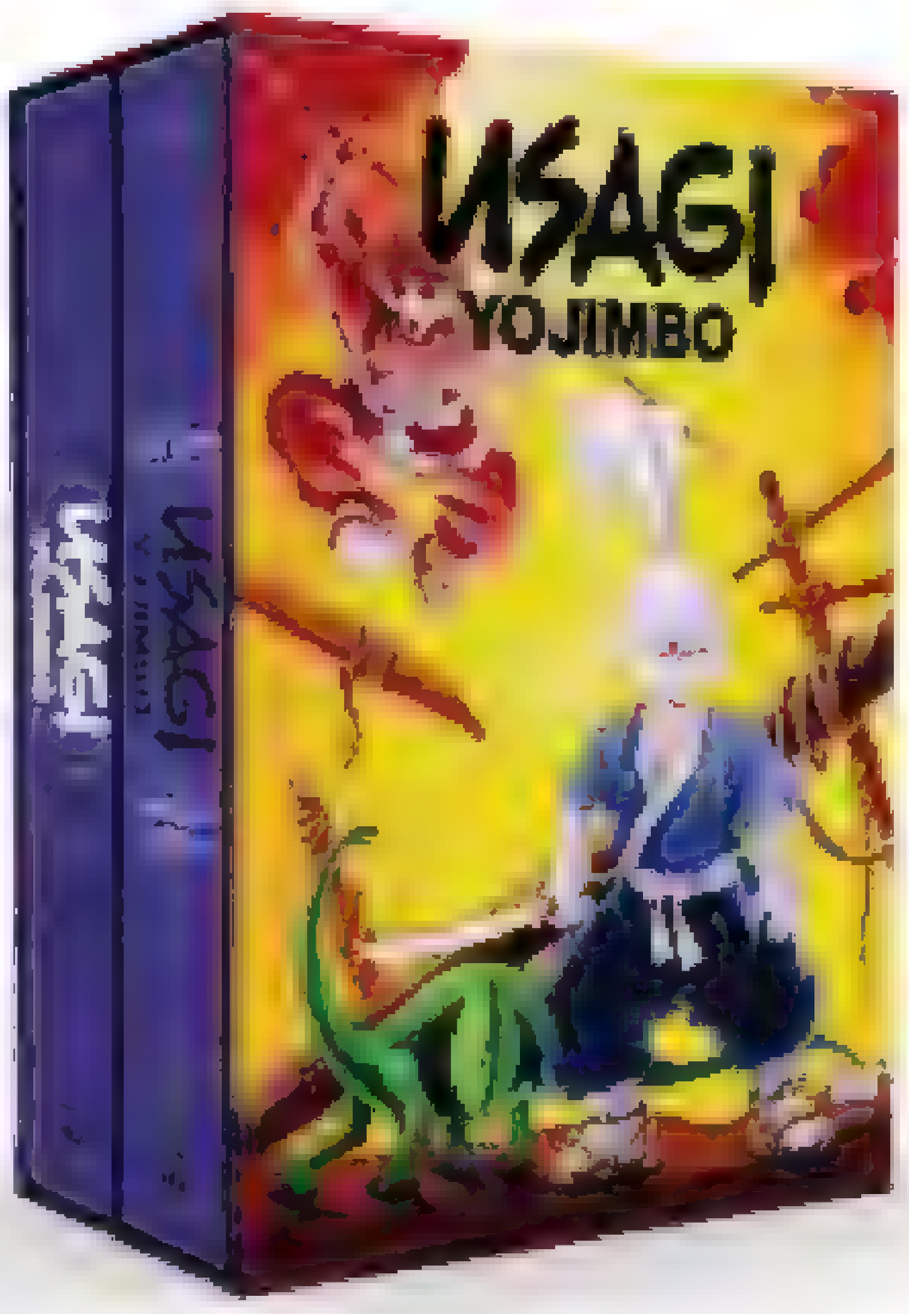
WRITER: Stan Sakai
ARTIST: Stan Sakai
PUBLISHER: Fantagraphics
OUT: Now
★★★★★

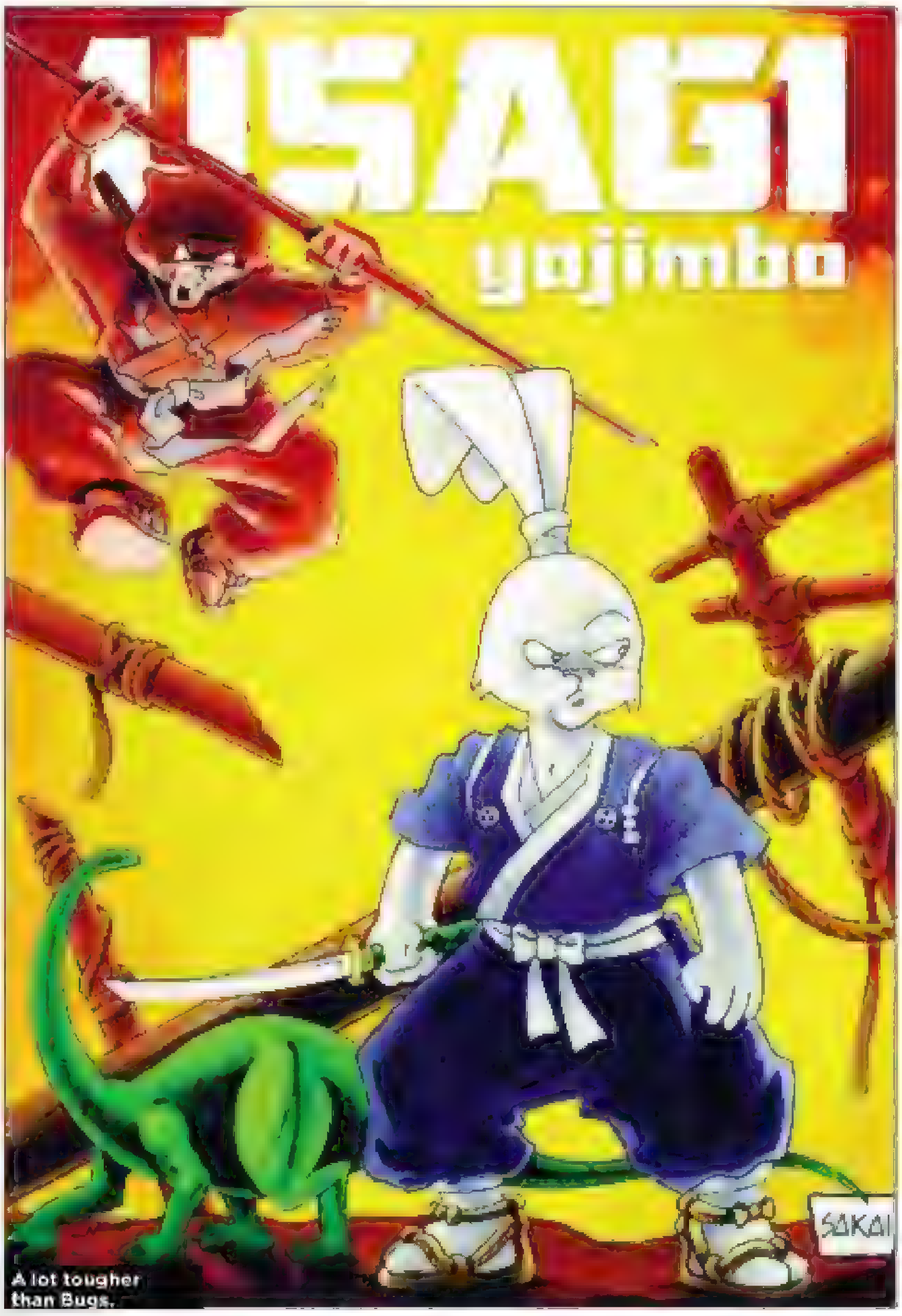
Writer/Artist Stan Sakai's satisfaction with his sketch of a rabbit with his ears tied in a samurai top-knot became the seed of one of the truly great works of anthropomorphic comics and, in the rabbit ronin himself, a fantastic and riveting character. Containing a whopping 1,000 pages, this opulent £75 two-volume slipcased set houses the first decade (and all the Fantagraphics-published material) of the long-running, Eisner Award-winning series, which began in 1987.

Heavily influenced by the likes of Akira Kurosawa and other iconic Japanese cinema, *Usagi Yojimbo* is anchored on Sakai's masterful weaving of Japanese folklore and mythology, as well as his precise rendering of typical period styles and traditions, generating serious gravitas throughout these episodic – and suitably violent – tales. Despite Sakai's cartoonish style, the tales have a distinct cinematic sense to them and the many fight sequences are superbly dynamic.

The set's extras offer an extensive Sakai interview, his character sketches, an informative look at his drawing process and a complete cover gallery. An added amusement is the inclusion of two amusing Usagi crossovers with the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles – back in the day when they were actual ninjas, as opposed to the later, neutered 'Hero' versions. While a pricey investment, it's a gorgeous presentation of an enthralling genre high-point.

Danny Graydon





A lot tougher than Bugs.

MOUSE GUARD: LEGENDS OF THE GUARD

WRITERS: David Petersen, various

ARTISTS: David Petersen, Gene Ha, Guy Davis, Ted Naifeh, many more

PUBLISHER: Archaia

OUT: Now

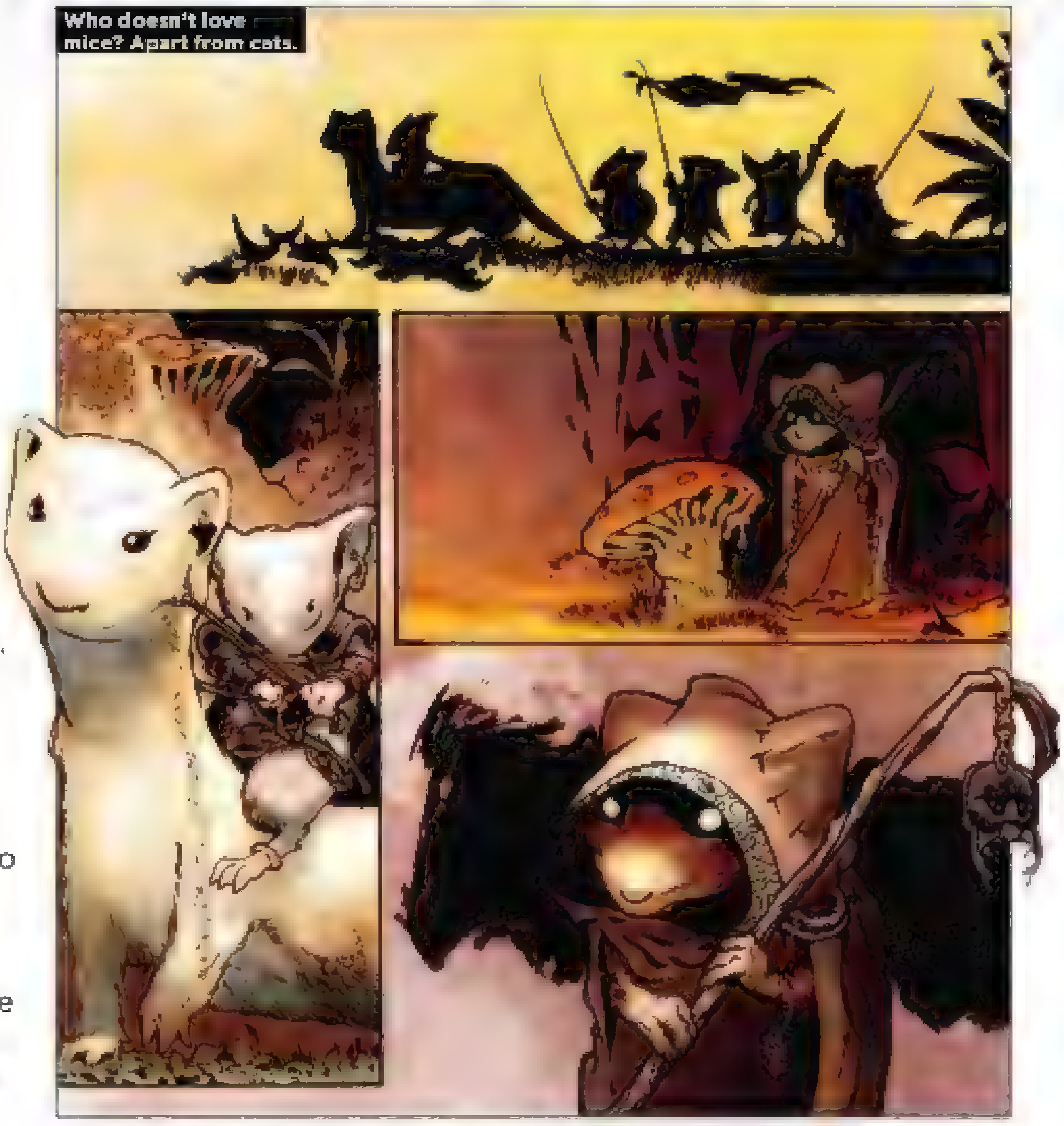
★★★★

Mouse Guard, if you're unfamiliar with it, is a terrific series; a Tolkien-esque fantasy romp that details the intricate society and politics of a rodent-populated fantasy kingdom, plus a hefty amount of derring-do and dangerous adventures.

Legends Of The Guard is a stand-alone collected anthology in which series creator Petersen has invited some of comics's best and brightest stars to play in his world. The framing device – patrons tell tales in the June Alley Inn in a bid to get their tabs cleared – is beautifully drawn by Petersen himself but the rest of the tales therein are no less impressive. There's also a cover gallery, map of the inn and a guide to its clientele. Altogether, it's a gorgeous package.

Taking the form of short fables or parables, each story is a delight and gloriously rendered. Highlights include Alex Sherman and Scott Keating's 'Oleg The Wise', Gene Ha and Lowell Francis' 'Worley And The Mink', and Katie Cook's cartoonish but affecting 'A Mouse Named Fox', to name but three.

Regardless of whether you know anything about *Mouse Guard* or not, these are lovely little tales for young and old alike, and serve as splendid primers for the series proper. **Jes Bickham**


Who doesn't love mice? Apart from cats.

FANTASTIC FOUR VOLUME 1

WRITER: Jonathan Hickman

ARTIST: Dale Eaglesham

PUBLISHER: Marvel Comics

OUT: Now

★★★½

'Solve Everything' – the first story in this collection – is the answer to the question behind every other question. Reed Richards decides enough is enough, that he wants to solve everything and in doing so discovers other versions of him have had the same idea...

Jonathan Hickman has made a name for himself with a string of blisteringly comic mini-series for Image and he brings the same huge concepts to bear here with tremendous effect. He's a natural fit for *Fantastic Four* and the idea of Reed joining forces with dozens of other versions of himself is elegant and cheerfully demented. Hickman even expands the idea and uses it to not only explore Reed's genius but his humanity. He's defined by his family as much as his work and that's neatly shown by both Hickman and Eaglesham, who also emphasises the humanity of the characters.

For all that though, the book's a little cold. Hickman loves big ideas but he still takes a while zeroing in on character and humour, and both seem forced here. That said, there's still a huge amount to enjoy and, as Hickman's run builds to a crescendo, there's never been a better time to jump aboard. **Alasdair Stuart**

FANTASTIC FOUR

"It's been *that* long in the making..."

THE GREEN HORNET

The troubled take on an old-time superhero wobbles to the cinema....

12A/119 minutes
DIRECTOR: Michel Gondry
CAST: Seth Rogan, Jay Chou, Cameron Diaz, Christoph Waltz, David Harbor, Edward James Olmos, Tom Wilkinson
OUT: Now
★★½

So arrives the first of 2011's domino-masked, green-prefixed crime fighters – in utterly gratuitous 3D. Yep, the 3D lends nothing to *The Green Hornet*, except maybe a few headaches. Director Michel Gondry (*Be Kind Rewind*) doesn't seem interested in optical protuberances. Instead, he and star, co-writer and executive producer Seth Rogan have made a movie where the main gag is that, in the heroic pairing of the Green Hornet and his 'sidekick', it's the latter who brings everything to the table.

The Green Hornet, who first appeared in a 1930s radio serial, is here the alter-ego of Britt Reid (Seth Rogan), an indolent LA playboy who has grown up cowed by his father, newspaper owner James (Tom Wilkinson) – who even scolded his son for trying to stand up to bullies at school. We're told this story not once but twice, just to hammer it home, and it's pretty much all the back-story Britt gets. That virtuous sentiment emerges when Britt sees a couple being mugged and intervenes. An inept fighter, he's saved by chauffeur Kato – who was famously played by Bruce Lee in the '60s TV series and is here played by Jay Chou, after years of development hell saw Jet Li and Stephen Chow come and go.

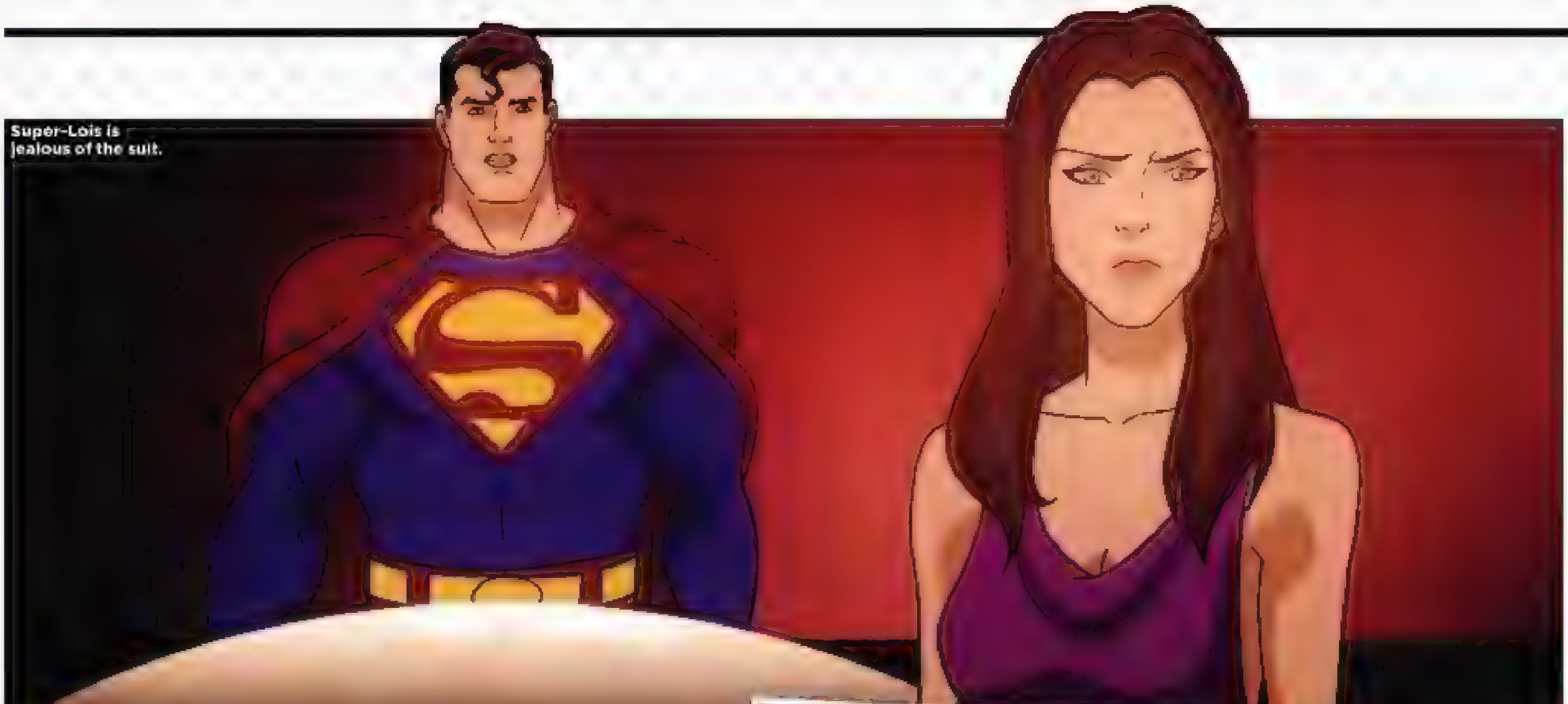
The encounter gives Reid the idea to become a masked crime-fighter. But with a twist: they'll "pose as villains but act like good guys". His reasoning is not exactly clear, but martial arts expert, genius technologist, master barista and general "human Swiss army knife" Kato goes along with it. With the unwitting help of Britt's new secretary/journo/criminologist, Lenore Case (Cameron Diaz), the Hornet and Kato start taking on drug dealers – which puts them on a collision course with quietly eccentric LA mob boss Chudnofsky, played by *Inglourious Basterds*' Christophe Waltz.

In 3D this looks, well... like it does in 2D.

It's all somewhat convoluted, and even stiff – which is odd considering both Gondry and Rogan are associated with more freewheeling movies. Luckily Waltz is good value and Rogan (playing yet another variation of his slacker persona, albeit slimmed down) and Taiwanese star Chou have good chemistry. The film warms up as they get more into their roles. They've both ostensibly got the hots for Lenore, but it's bromance all the way, bro. Like Rogan's earlier bromance, *Pineapple Express*, it follows the rom-com formula right down to Britt and Kato having a falling out, then making up to save the day. This involves trashing a swathe of LA with destructive violence that's strangely retro – more like something from a 1980s *Die Hard* than a 2010s 3D spectacle.

Not as much fun as it should be, *The Green Hornet* feels like a slightly awkward ménage a trois between the idiosyncrasies of Gondry, the fanboy aspirations of Rogan and the requirements of a mainstream Hollywood franchise-builder. Still, the car is pretty cool.

Daniel Etherington



Super-Lois is jealous of the suit.

That doesn't look very friendly.

ALL-STAR **SUPERMAN**

PG/75 mins
DIRECTOR: Sam Liu
WRITER: Dwayne McDuffie
CAST: James Denton, Christina Hendricks Anthony LaPaglia
OUT: Now
★★★★

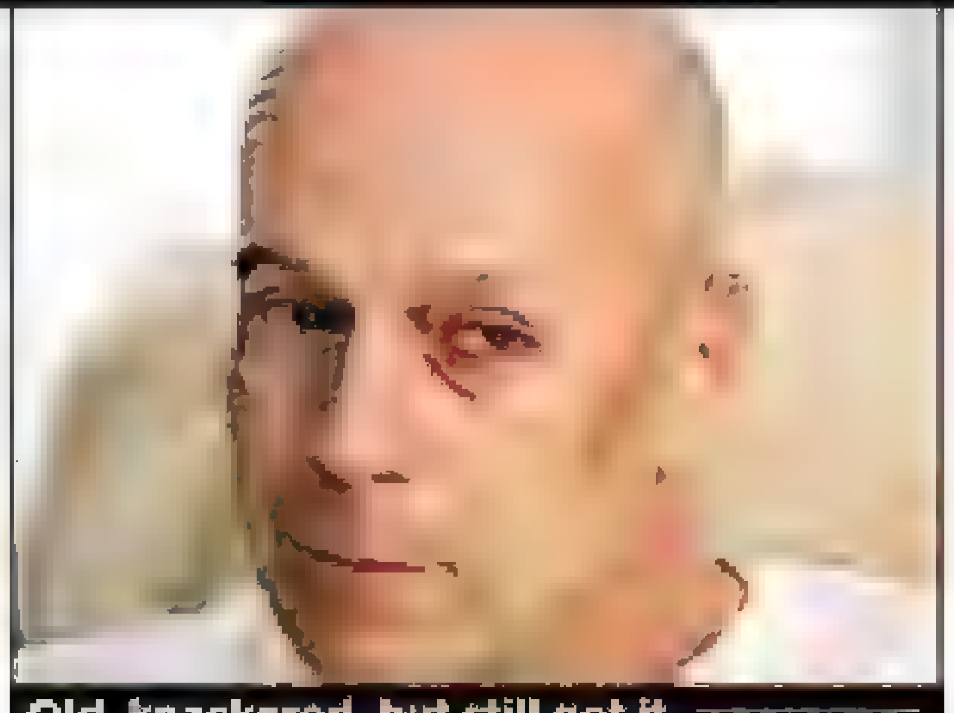
The direct-to-video DC Universe Animated Movies line has been a great way of transferring DC's most popular (recent) storylines on to the screen, escaping proper movie development hell and fully capitalising on their acclaimed track record in animation. With their tenth effort, they tackle an outright modern classic: Grant Morrison and Frank Quitely's epic, teeming-with-ideas Superman tale was a high-point for the character. It was a terrific challenge and the result is an exciting adaptation, if inevitably straightforward.

The 75-minute run time necessitates a great deal of streamlining and here, Morrison's epic '12 Labours of Hercules' narrative – effectively adapted by comics writer Dwayne McDuffie – is distilled down to a dying Superman taking on a powered Lex Luthor while saving the earth one last time before he dies. It's hard not to lament the disposal of specific episodes – although thankfully, 'Super-Lois' is in – and their many nuances, but the action-packed core has been faithfully kept, if not always the defining sweetness, with Superman's affectingly-stoic facing of death pleasingly maintained.

Admirably, the effort to reflect Quitely's artwork pays off handsomely and the voice cast really impresses – especially *Mad Men*'s Hendricks as Lois, who nails the mix of vivacity and softness – and the film ultimately complements the comics. The Blu-ray edition offers a full array of extras: the film in standard, high-def and digital copies, commentary with Bruce Timm and Grant Morrison, an interview with Morrison, two episodes of *Superman: The Animated Series* and a Superman Now featurette, detailing the genesis of the original series.

Danny Graydon

Ooh, it's just like the comic!


Old, knackered, but still got it.

RED

12/106mins

DIRECTOR: Robert Schwentke

WRITERS: Jon Hoeber, Eric Hoeber (screenplay), Warren Ellis (graphic novel)

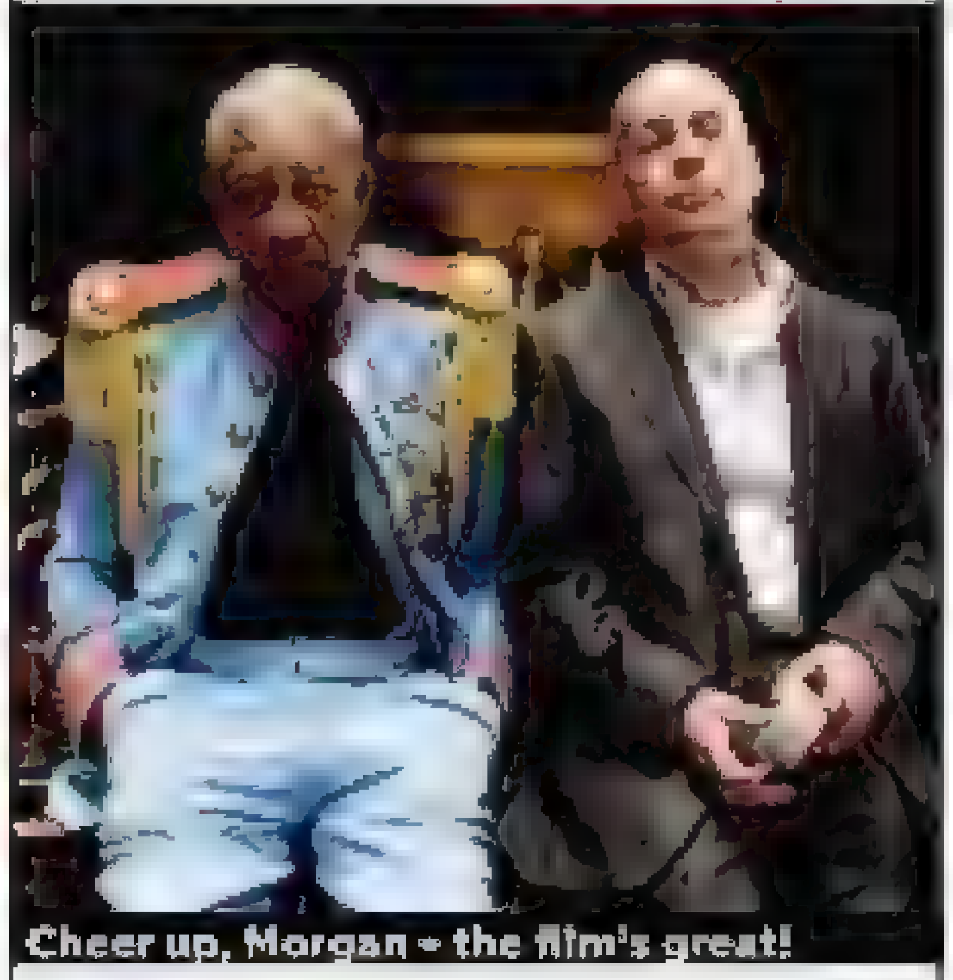
CAST: Bruce Willis, Morgan Freeman John Malkovich, Helen Mirren, Karl Urban, Mary-Louise Parker, Richard Dreyfus, Brian Cox

OUT: Now

★★★½

There is a point in *Red*, Warren Ellis' brutal graphic novel, where ex-CIA agent Frank Moses, hounded out of retirement by a government intent on putting the former assassin out to pasture permanently, takes a palm dagger and, with the hint of a grin on his wizened visage, plants it in the face of an unknowing local police officer.

Needless to say, the light comedy of *Red*'s big-name movie adaptation doesn't quite embrace the in-your-face bloodshed of its print relation, but it's no bad thing. Using Ellis' uncompromising and claret-spattered mini-series as (very) loose framework, *Red* broadens out the original story as Moses (Bruce Willis) teams up with a network of retired agents to take down a government conspiracy involving the Vice President, Guatamala and a hit list uncovered by a murdered reporter. Far from cold blooded, between John Malkovich's acid-fried paranoia and Helen Mirren's machine-gunning it's difficult to find fault in something as well put together and entertaining as *Red* clearly is. **Rob Power**


Cheer up, Morgan – the film's great!

FANDEX DELUXE: DC COMICS SUPER HEROES AND VILLAINS

DC COMICS
SUPER HEROES AND VILLAINS
75
Perfect for already out of date facts.

WRITERS: Various

ARTISTS: Various

PUBLISHER: Workman Publishing

OUT: Now

★★½

Some things are wonderful, many are crap, but few are both at once. Here's one: a sort of Pantone book of DC big shots, from Batman to Black Lightning, each character getting two sides of a long, thin card strip, the 'Fandex' containing 75 of these things bolted together at one end so you can fan them out like a giant hand of cards. It's a pleasing item, featuring great images from top-notch artists – Adams, Bolland, Lee – with each card die-cut in interesting ways at the top, so Catwoman's ears or Adam Strange's helmet fin poke proud. Text-wise there's little to write home about, with party line-spouting hero histories the order of the day – Batman will never carry a gun, we hear, which will be news to Bob Kane amongst others – but with the physicality of this thing they're not always that easy to read anyway. **Matt Bielby**

THE WEIRD WORLD OF EERIE PUBLICATIONS

WRITER: Mike Howlett

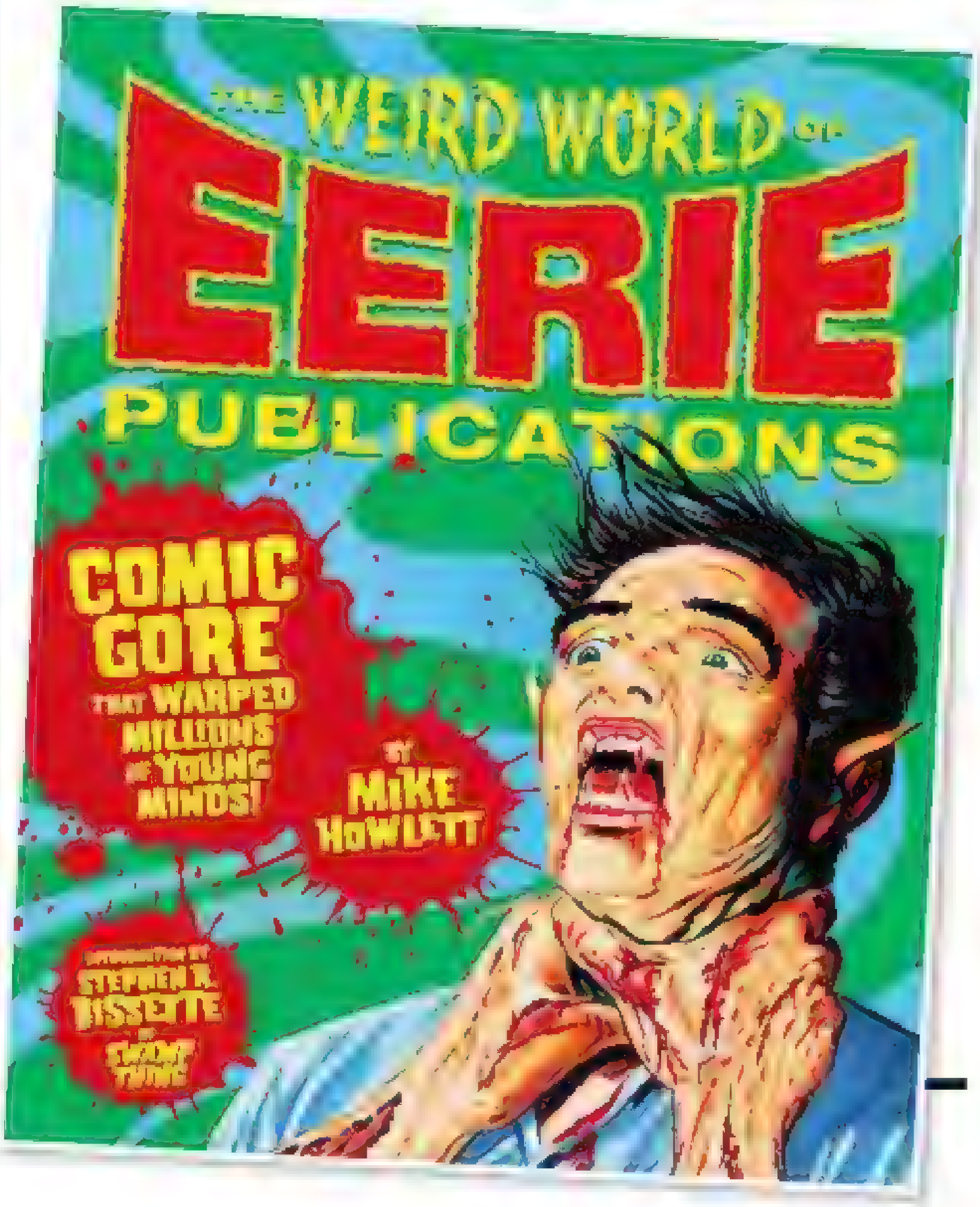
PUBLISHER: Feral House

OUT: Now

★★★½

Take a glance at this rambling, confused, sporadically fascinating labour of love – over 300 pages of the most obscure horror comic covers and strips, together with commentary – and you'd imagine it must be about *Eerie*, Warren Publishing's black-and-white anthology comics magazine of the '60s, sister title to *Creepy* and *Vampirella*. But you'd be wrong! We're actually in the world of Warren's down-market competitor Eerie Publications here, a ragtag outfit run by the bizarre Myron Fass, producer of crude, grubby wannabes like *Tales of Voodoo*, *Crime Does Not Pay* and, perhaps the best known, *Weird*.

Fass paid peanuts, terrorised staff, packed a loaded handgun in the office – we're told he fired it at least once – and gleefully plagiarised rivals (or himself) wherever possible. And through a baffling web of jobs, imprints and companies he'd publish anything – girlie mags (*Ogle*, *Jaguar*), humour (*Lunatickle*), hot rod, shark and gun titles, and anything to do with UFOs, which he loved and believed in. (One time he tried to get the editor of a one-shot on Swine Flu – a hot topic in the mid-'70s – to blame it on aliens, firing him when he wouldn't.) Though Howlett – clearly aware of (and fascinated by) the oft-shoddy nature of the Eerie titles – finds it hard to pull a clear narrative from the maze of people and publications covered here, it's in the illustrations and anecdotes that his book begins to exert its fascination: the lurid covers (a man thrusts a white-hot poker up a bound woman's skirt), the grisly coverlines ("They stuffed him into a furnace") and the grim strips (a couple are eaten by giant ants). Where other publishers scored in terms of decent production values, competent artwork and well-crafted stories, Eerie Publications could always be relied upon to bring the nasty.
Matt Bielby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INTRODUCTION BY STEPHEN R. BISSETTE OF SWAMP THING

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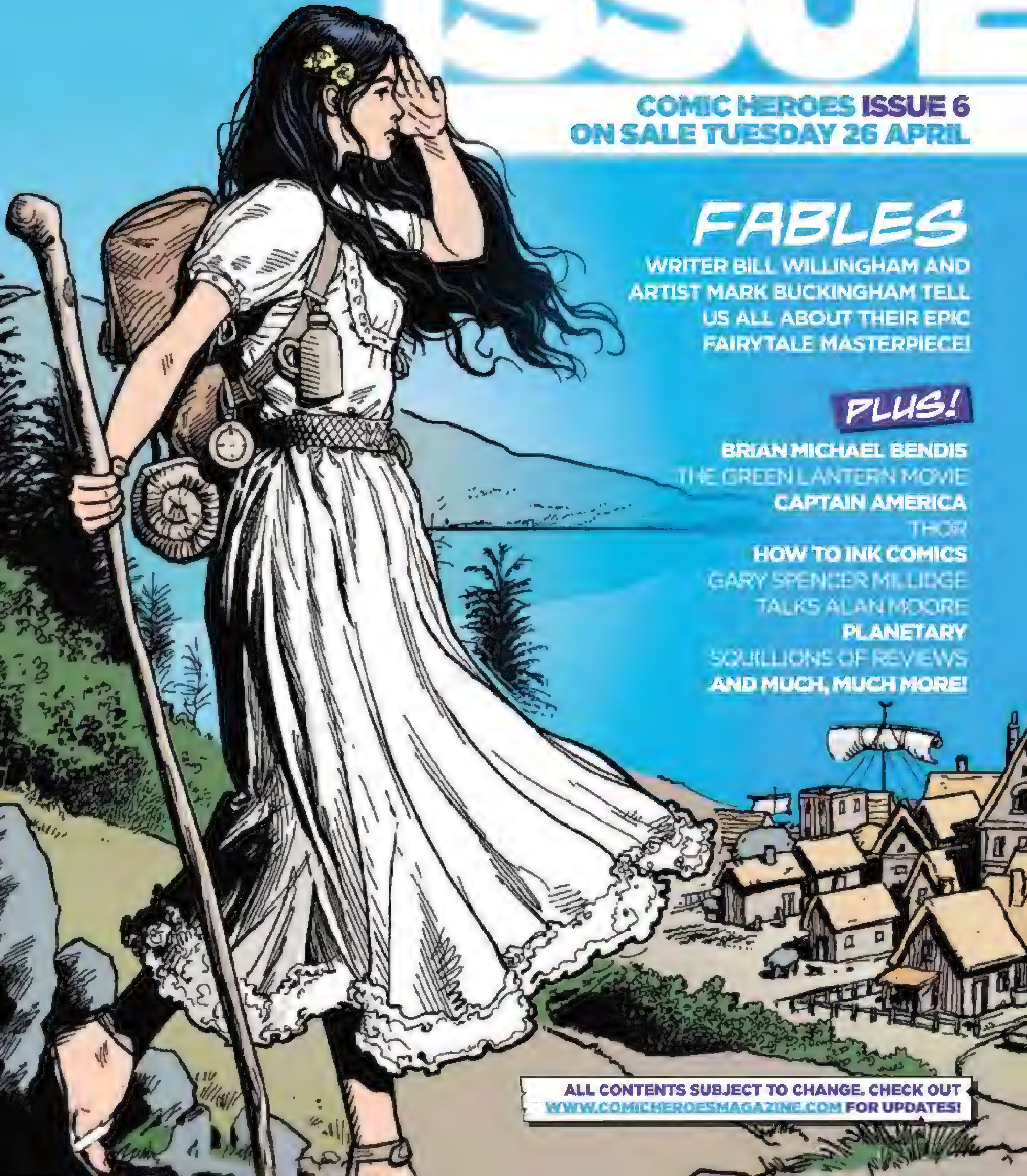
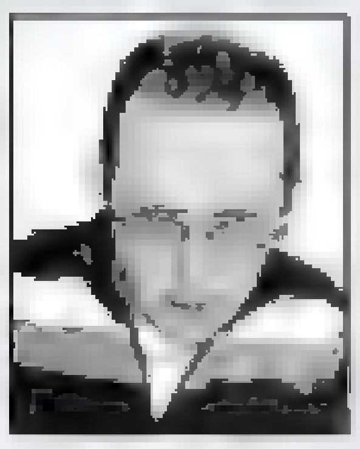


MY INSPIRATION

FRAZER IRVING



Frazer Irving broke into comics through his art for various strips in the evergreen British anthology title *2000 AD*, including *The Simping Detective*, *Storming Heaven* and *Necronauts*. He's gone on to illustrate *Gutsville*, *Hellblazer*, *Iron Man* and, ooh, much, much more. Recently, he drew four issues of *Batman & Robin* for Grant Morrison (see main picture for an example). Here he details the things that poke him where he likes to be poked...

1 MOEBIUS

This is new(ish) to me, but his approach to drawing directly and with different line qualities has given me a much-needed refreshing view on comic art. That and the utter weirdness of his illustrations. What a dude.

2 BARRY WINDSOR-SMITH

An old favourite of mine dating from my teen years, but Bazza's linework always has such character and emotion, so much so that, in times of confusion, I'll always look at his mid-'80s stuff for a kick up the art muscle.

3 RICHARD CORBEN

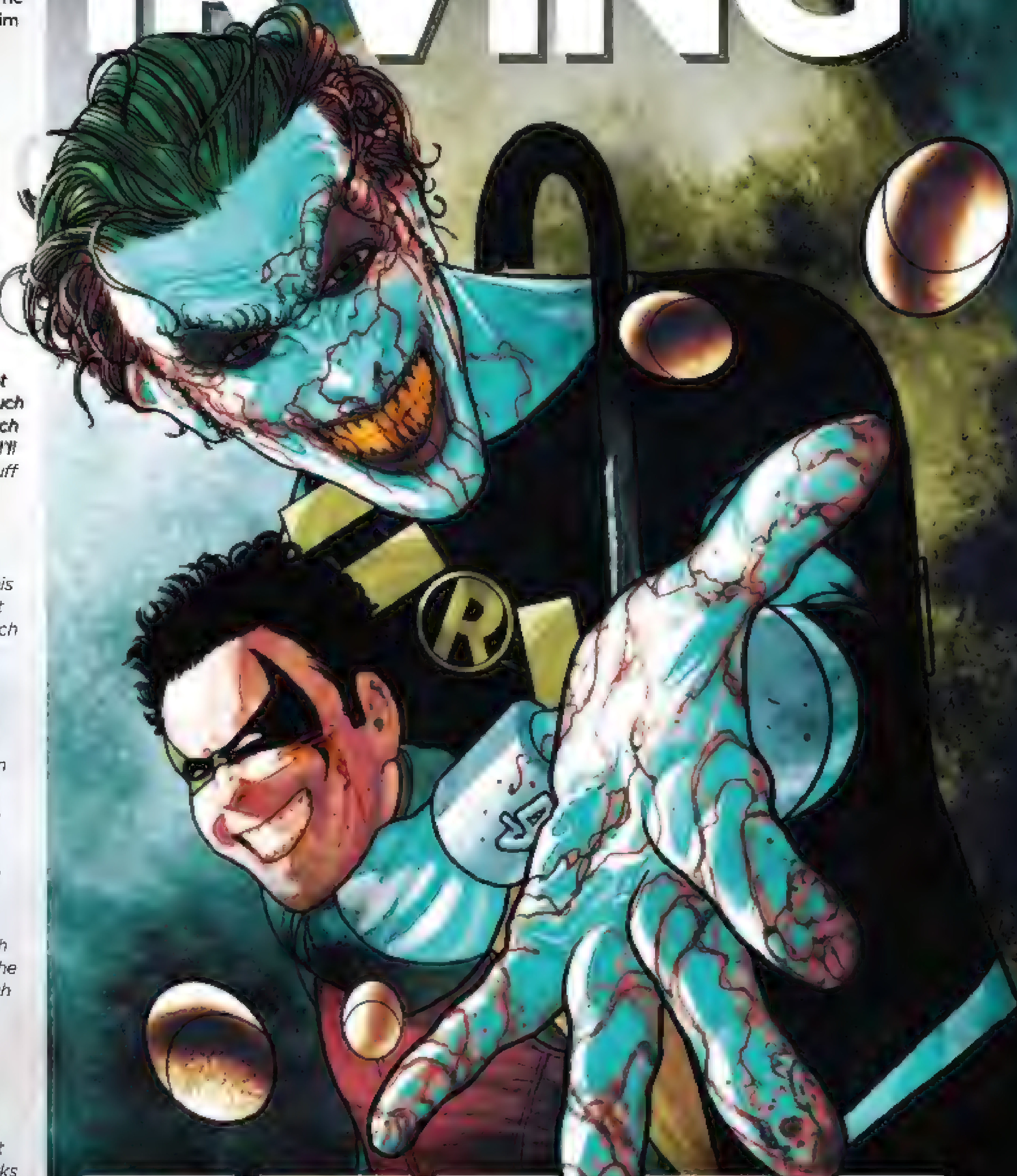
The man uses light and tone so effectively that even his distorted figures make perfect sense. I admire the way in which he continues to churn out the weird stuff regardless of what everyone else is doing.

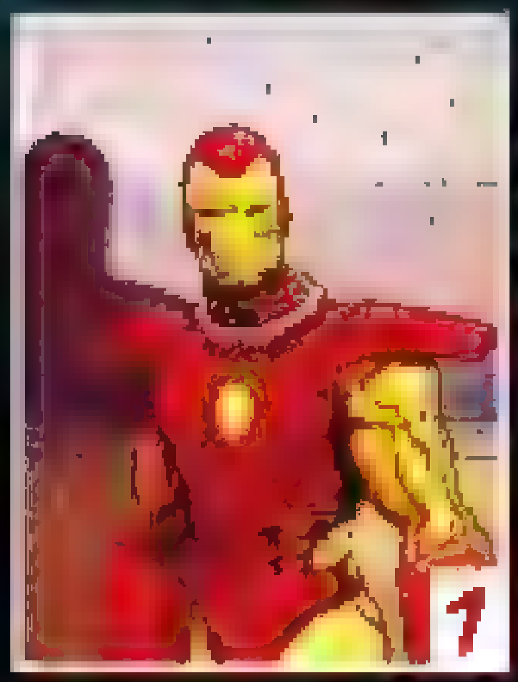
4 COFFEE

There are those days when tea just won't kick it. The pen is heavy, the eyes are shutting, bed calls sweet nothings from down the hall, and what it takes is the might of good old Fairtrade coffee to smack my butt into action. Sometimes it plays tag with Nicotine to push me through the night, but in the mornings it's my guide through the haze.

5 INTERNET

Yes, despite its myriad of distractions, the internet also holds such marvels of art and illustration that I'm never short of inspiring or humiliating works to gaze at. Wikipedia contains so many different pages of stuff that after an hour link-hopping I have more ideas than my mortal mind can hold, thus I spit them onto a document in Scrivener, where I allow them to breed so I can harvest them later.

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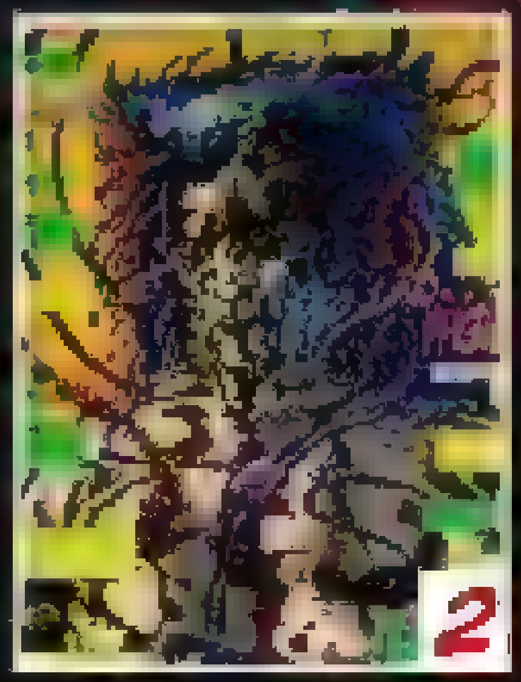
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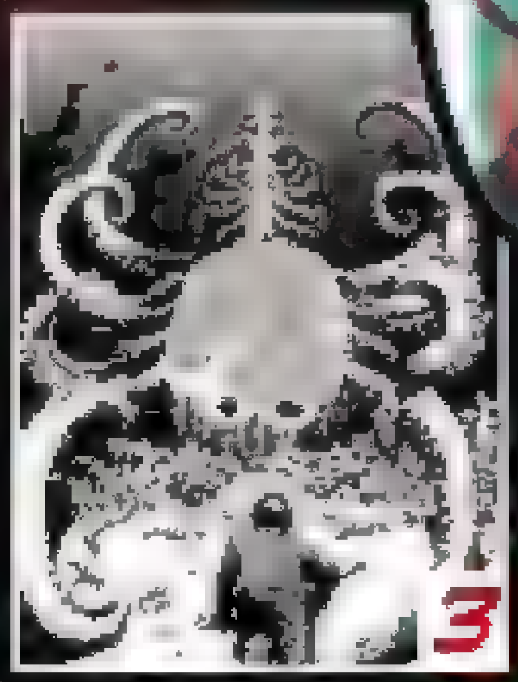
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ISSUE FOUR!

We've got a scintillating selection of comic previews both old and new in this instalment of *Sidekick*, from resurrected Brit-classics *Judge Dredd: Judgement Day* and *Darkie's Mob*, to Clive Barker's triumphant return to both comics and *Hellraiser*, plus some tantalising pages from the forthcoming *The Homeland Directive* by *The Surrogates* scribe Robert Venditti. Exciting, no?

And once again we hope we've managed to capture the breadth of comics, with the inclusion of SelfMadeHero's *Baby's In Black*, a slice of biographical drama that features a little rock 'n' roll band you might have heard of. Enjoy!

Jes

Jes Bickham, Editor

CONTENTS

PAGE 3 BABY'S IN BLACK

More biographical brilliance from SelfMadeHero, *Baby's In Black* is the story of Astrid Kirchherr, Stuart Sutcliffe and the Beatles in Hamburg, 1960.
Writer: Arne Bellstorf
Artist: Arne Bellstorf
Publisher: SelfMadeHero
Out: March
© 2010 SelfMadeHero
www.selfmadehero.com

PAGE 10 HELLRAISER

A real event – Clive Barker returns to write a new comic instalment of what's arguably his most famous creation. It'll tear your soul apart! (Probably.)
Writer: Clive Barker
Artist: Leonardo Manco
Publisher: Boom! Studios
Out: March
© Boom! Studios
www.boom-studios.com

PAGE 12 THE HOMELAND DIRECTIVE

Quite the coup for *Comic Heroes* and *Sidekick*, this: *The Homeland Directive* is the new graphic novel from *The Surrogates* writer Robert Venditti, and it's a thriller that focuses on an Orwellian present in which personal privacy and national security struggle to co-exist.
Writer: Robert Venditti
Artist: Mike Huddleston
Publisher: Top Shelf Productions
Out: May
© 2011 Robert Venditti
www.topshelfcomix.com

PAGE 18 AYAKO

The legendary Osamu Tezuka – the godfather of manga, no less (although we'd say he's more like the Walt Disney of manga) weaves a powerful family drama as seen through the lens of the cold war.
Writer: Osamu Tezuka
Artist: Osamu Tezuka
Publisher: Vertical
Out: Now
© 2010 Tezuka Productions – Vertical, Inc.
www.turnaround-uk.com

PAGE 22 DARKIE'S MOB

A proper British classic, this, straight from the pages of *Battle – Darkie's Mob*! Reprinted for the first time on 25 March, this is the story of renegade captain Joe Darkie leading a rag-tag mob of soldiers in a guerilla war against the Japanese.
Writer: John Wagner
Artist: Mike Western
Publisher: Titan
Out: 25 March
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PAGE 25 JUDGE DREDD: JUDGEMENT DAY

Another classic reprint here, from *Judge Dredd: Complete Case Files 17*, that needs no introduction – Garth Ennis' epic Dredd tale saw our hero go up against Johnny Alpha, the Strontium Dog. Coo!
Writer: Garth Ennis
Artist: Peter Doherty
Publisher: Rebellion
Out: Now
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PAGE 31 WITCHFINDER: LOST AND GONE FOREVER

Gothic horror in the frontier towns of the Old West! What more could you want from the fertile, febrile minds of Mignola and Arcudi and the legendary pen of John Severin?
Writers: Mike Mignola and John Arcudi
Artist: John Severin
Publisher: Dark Horse
Out: Now
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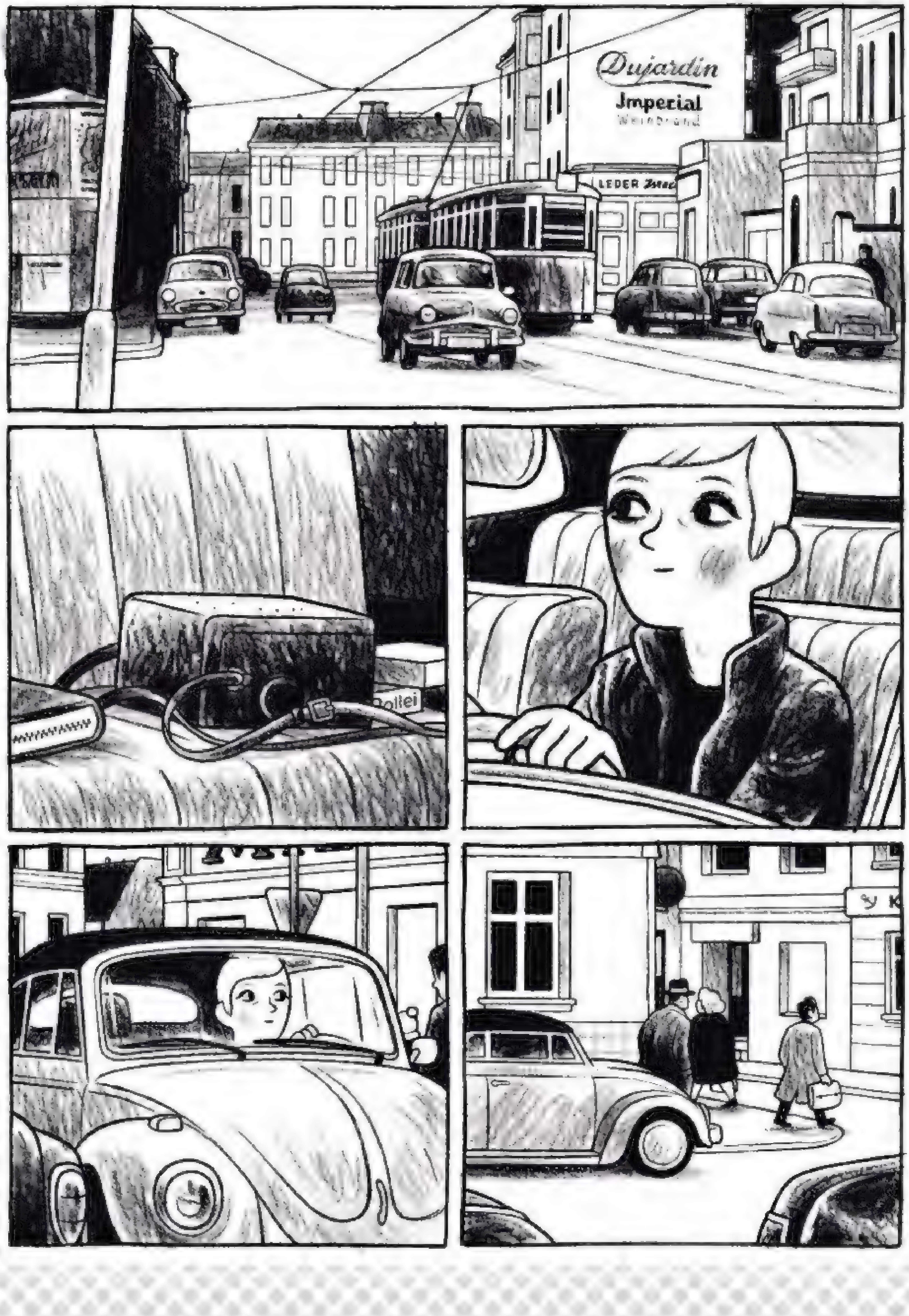
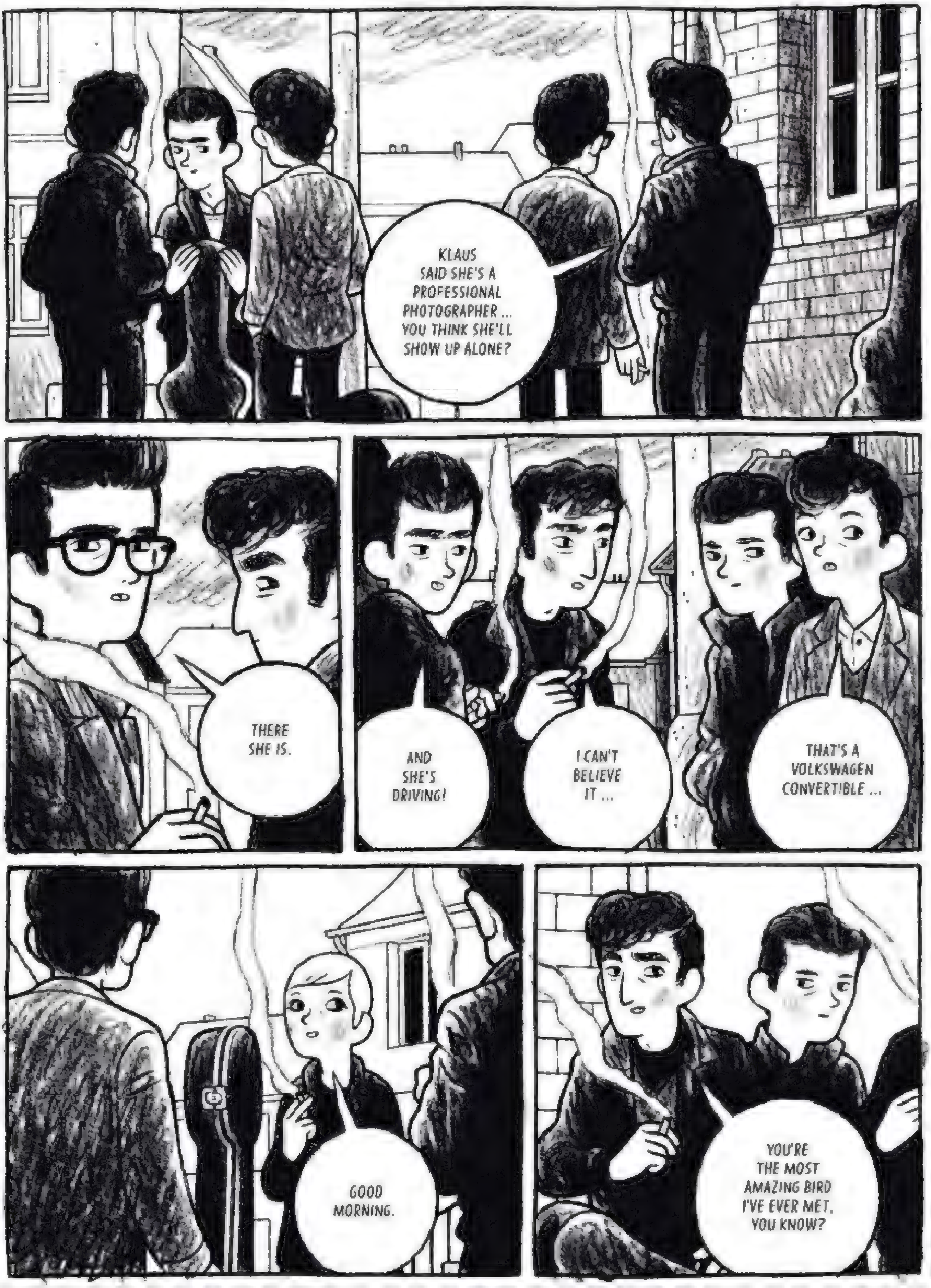
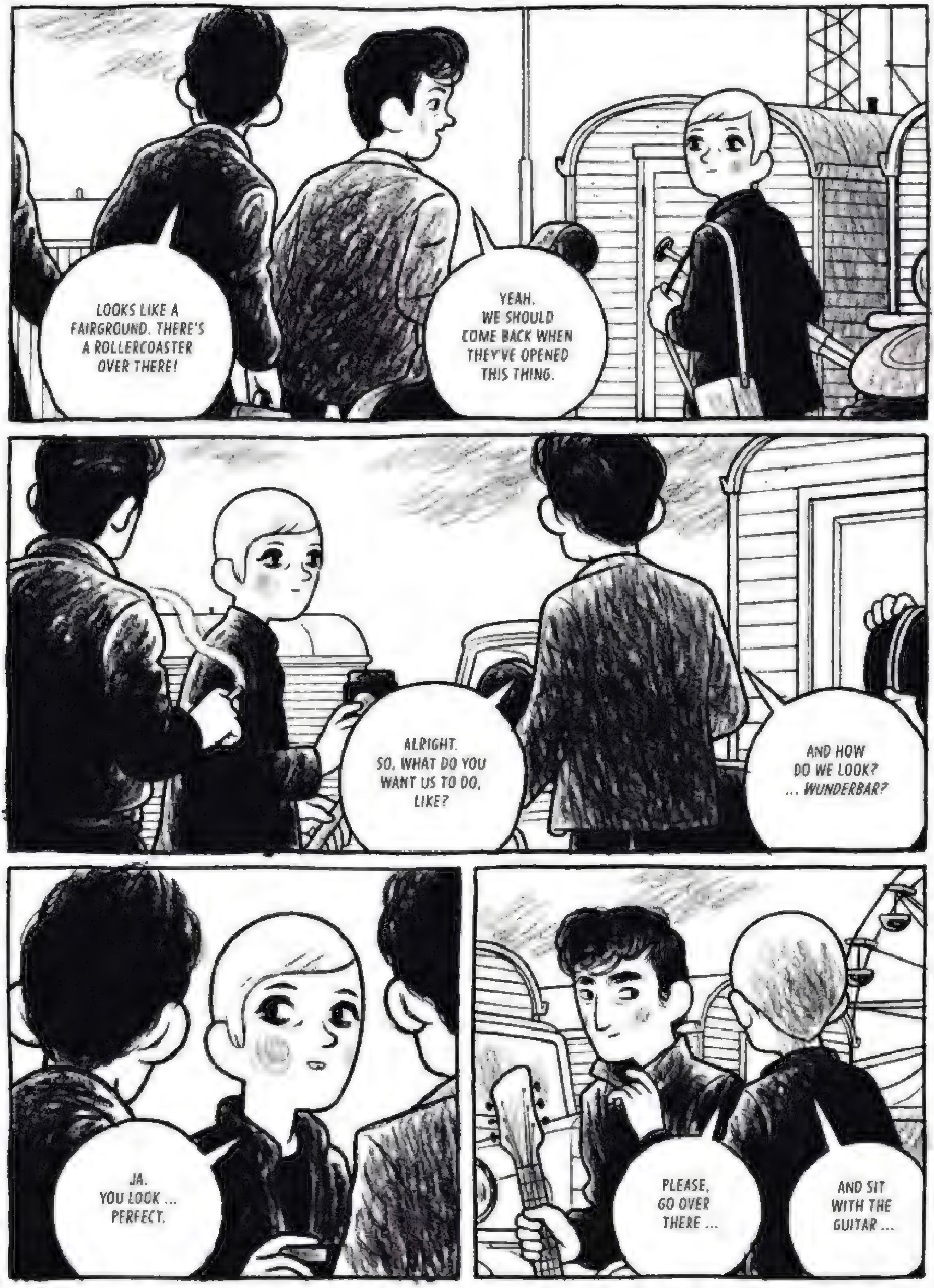
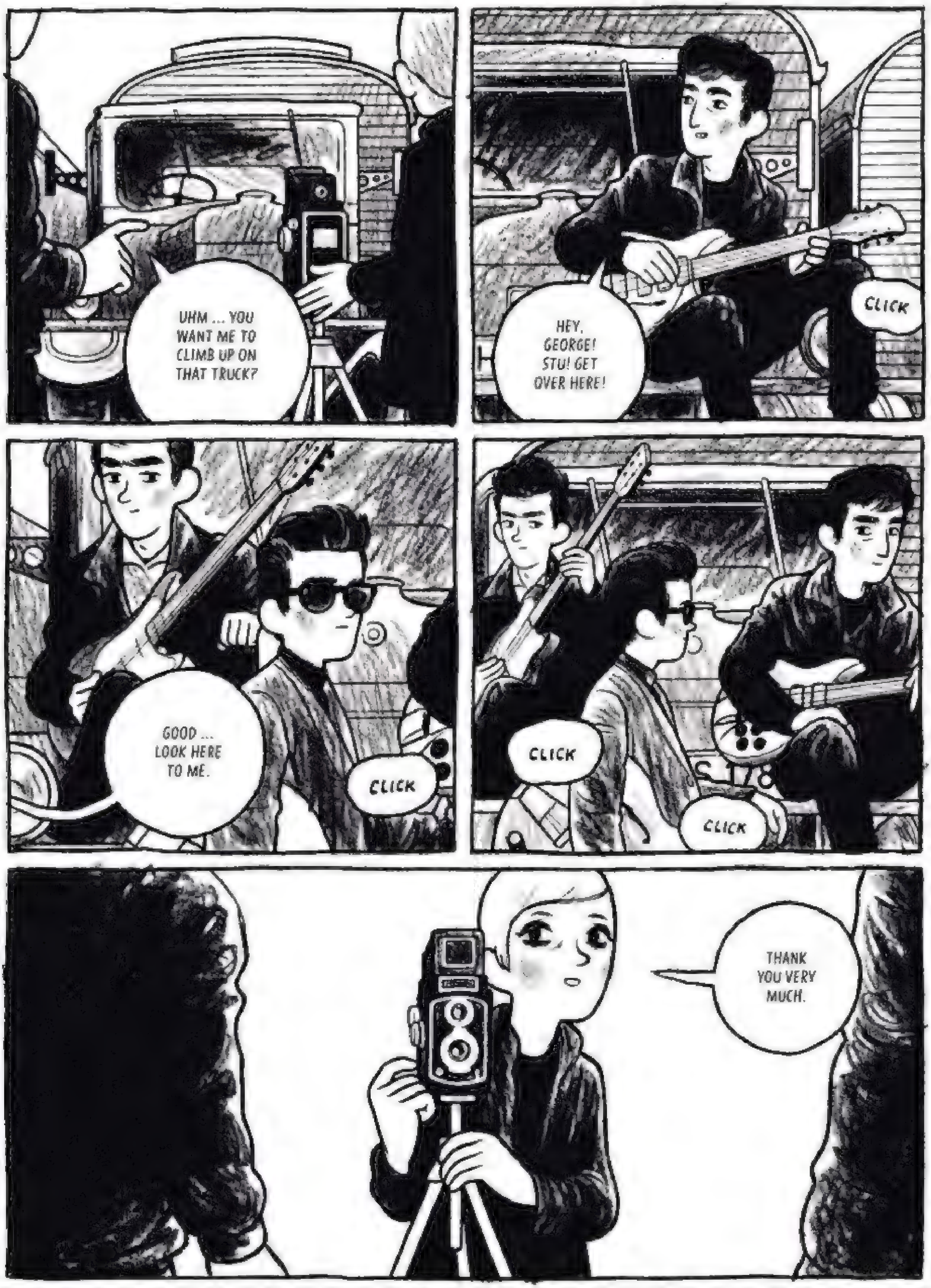
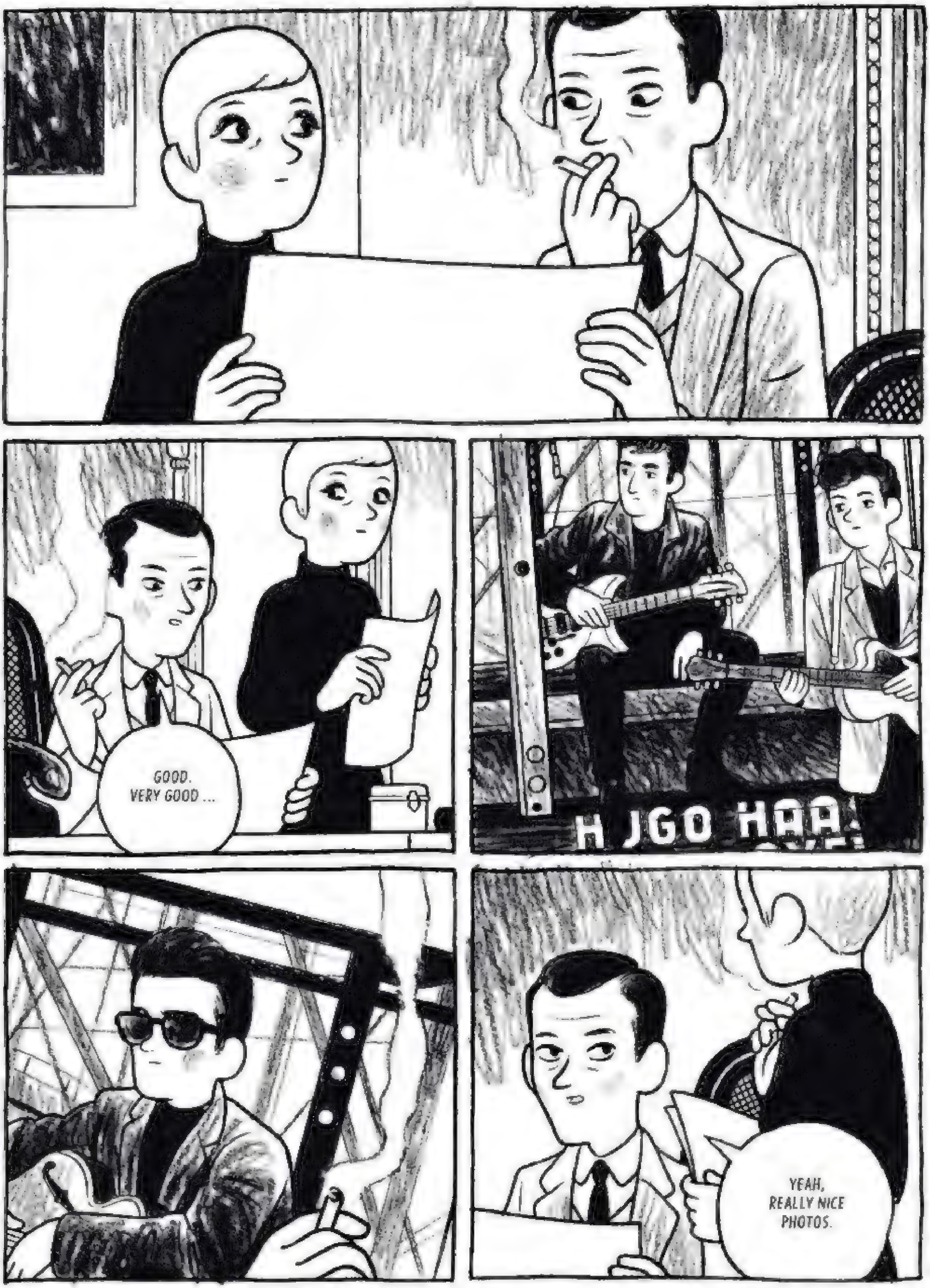
www.darkhorse.com

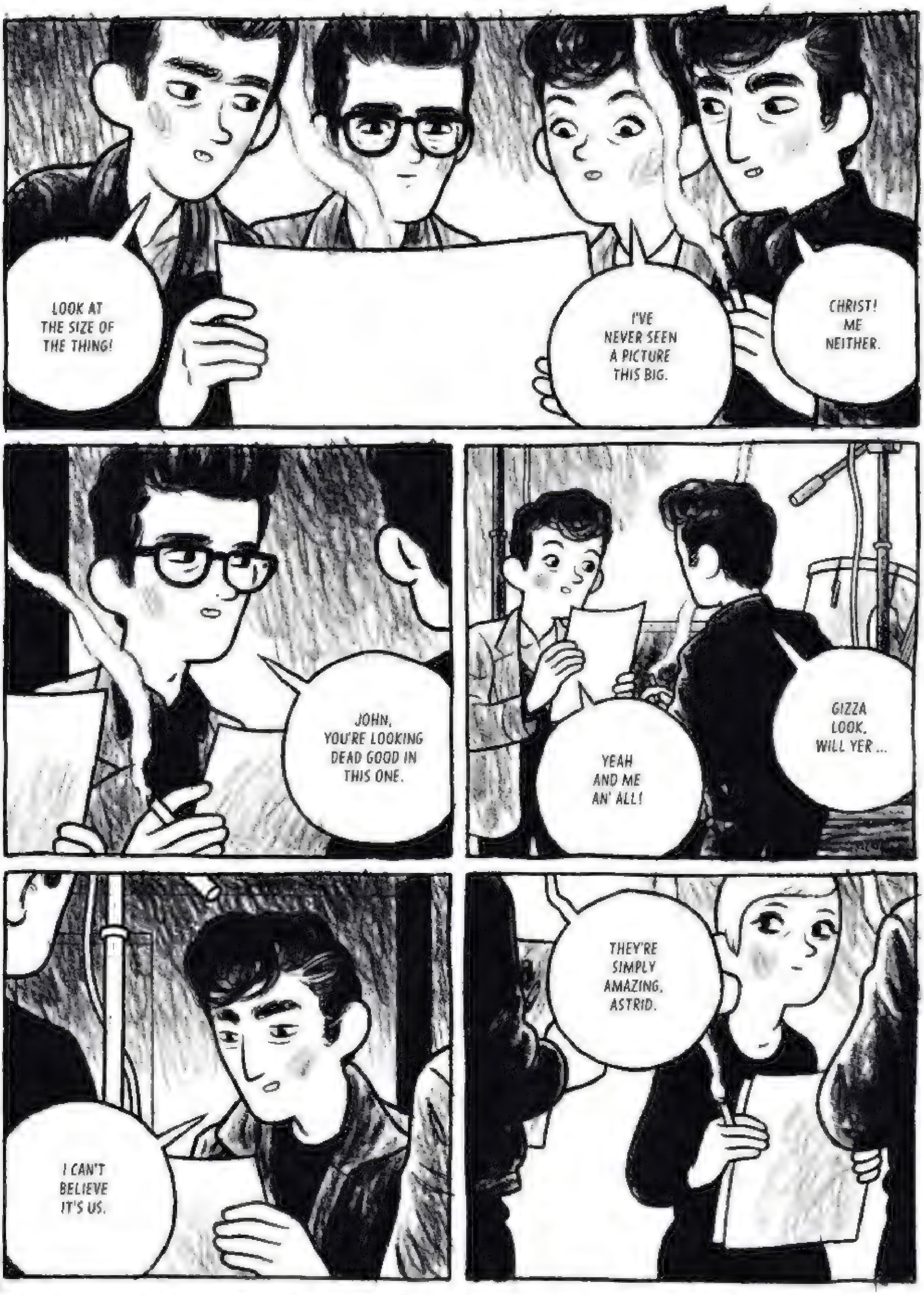

Dujardin
Imperial
Weinbrand
LEDER
Rollei

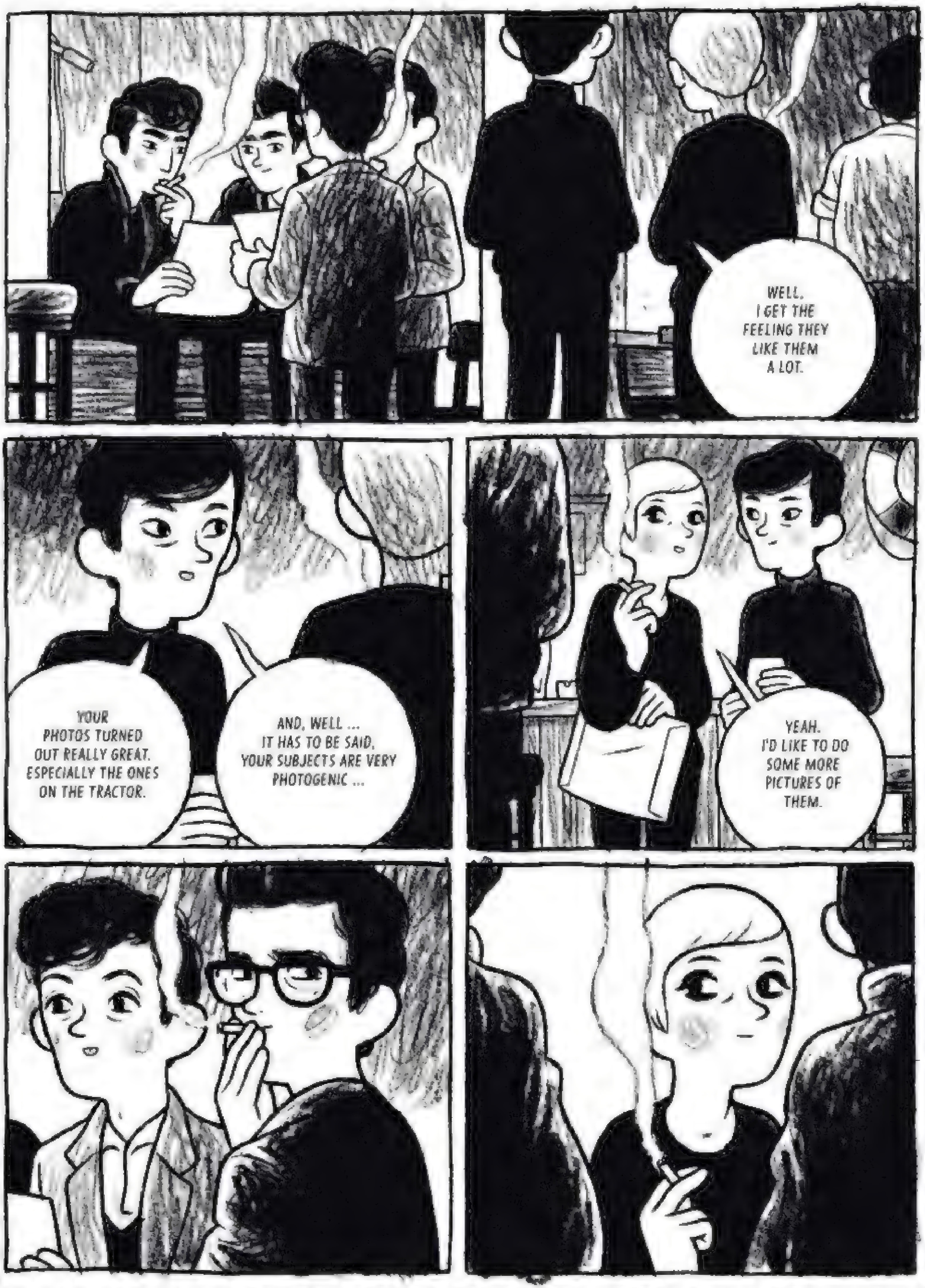

KLAUS SAID SHE'S A PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHER ... YOU THINK SHE'LL SHOW UP ALONE?
THERE SHE IS.
AND SHE'S DRIVING!
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT ...
THAT'S A VOLKSWAGEN CONVERTIBLE ...
GOOD MORNING.
YOU'RE THE MOST AMAZING BIRD I'VE EVER MET, YOU KNOW?

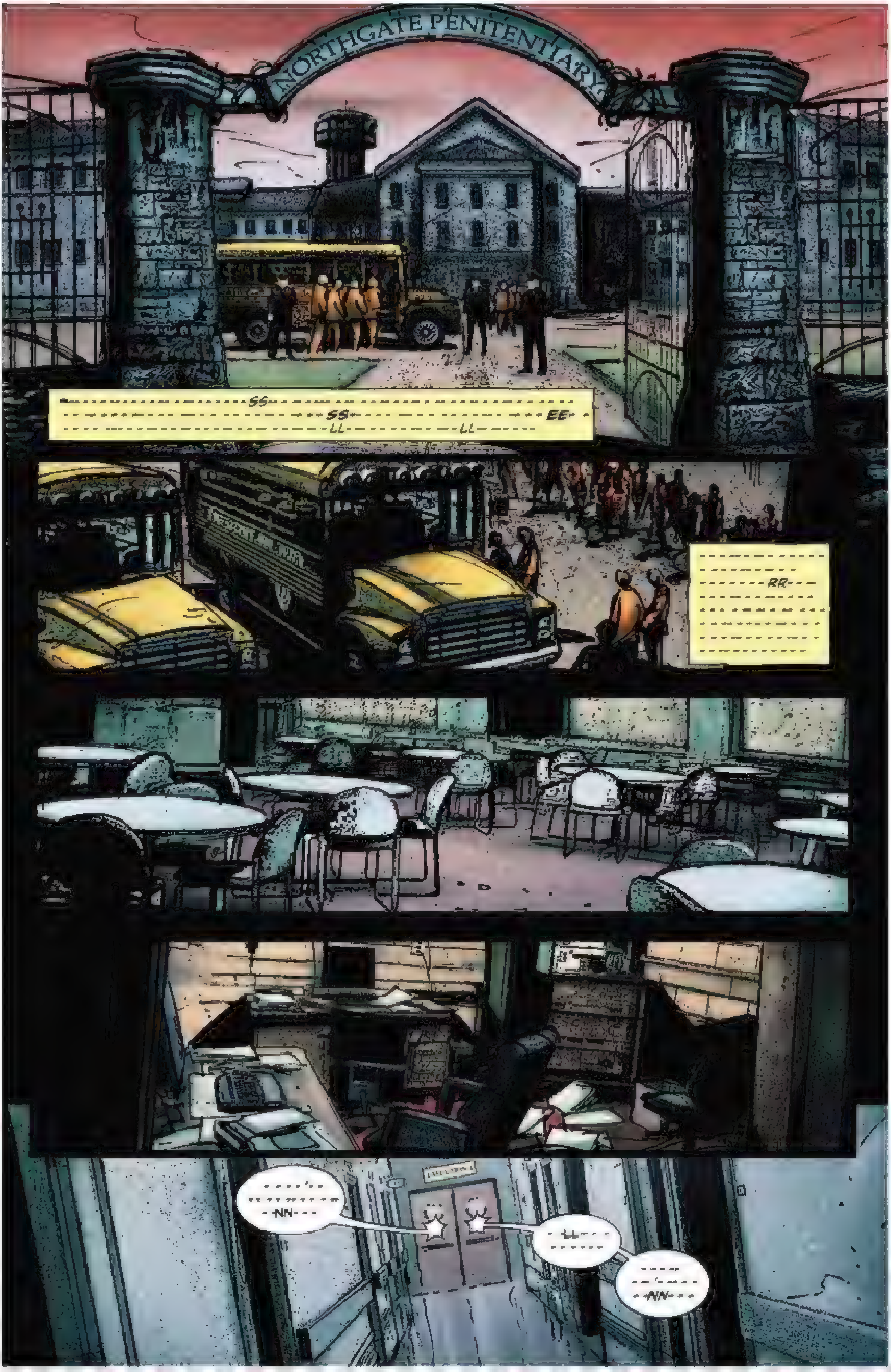

LOOKS LIKE A FAIRGROUND. THERE'S A ROLLERCOASTER OVER THERE!
YEAH. WE SHOULD COME BACK WHEN THEY'VE OPENED THIS THING.
ALRIGHT. SO, WHAT DO YOU WANT US TO DO, LIKE?
AND HOW DO WE LOOK? ... *WUNDERBAR?*
JA. YOU LOOK ... PERFECT.
PLEASE, GO OVER THERE ...
AND SIT WITH THE GUITAR ...

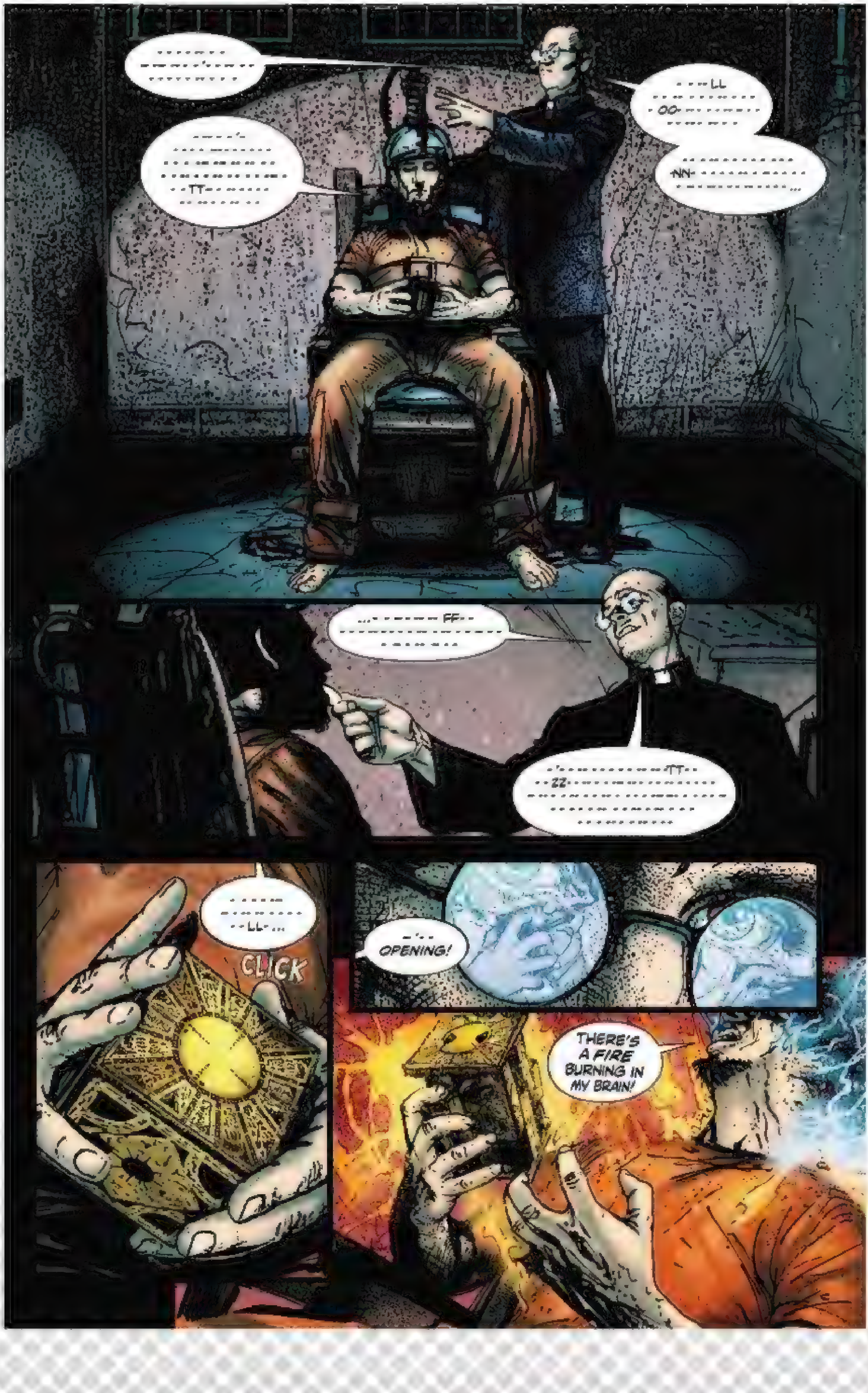

UHM ... YOU WANT ME TO CLIMB UP ON THAT TRUCK?
HEY, GEORGE! STU! GET OVER HERE!
CLICK
GOOD ... LOOK HERE TO ME.
CLICK
CLICK
CLICK
THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

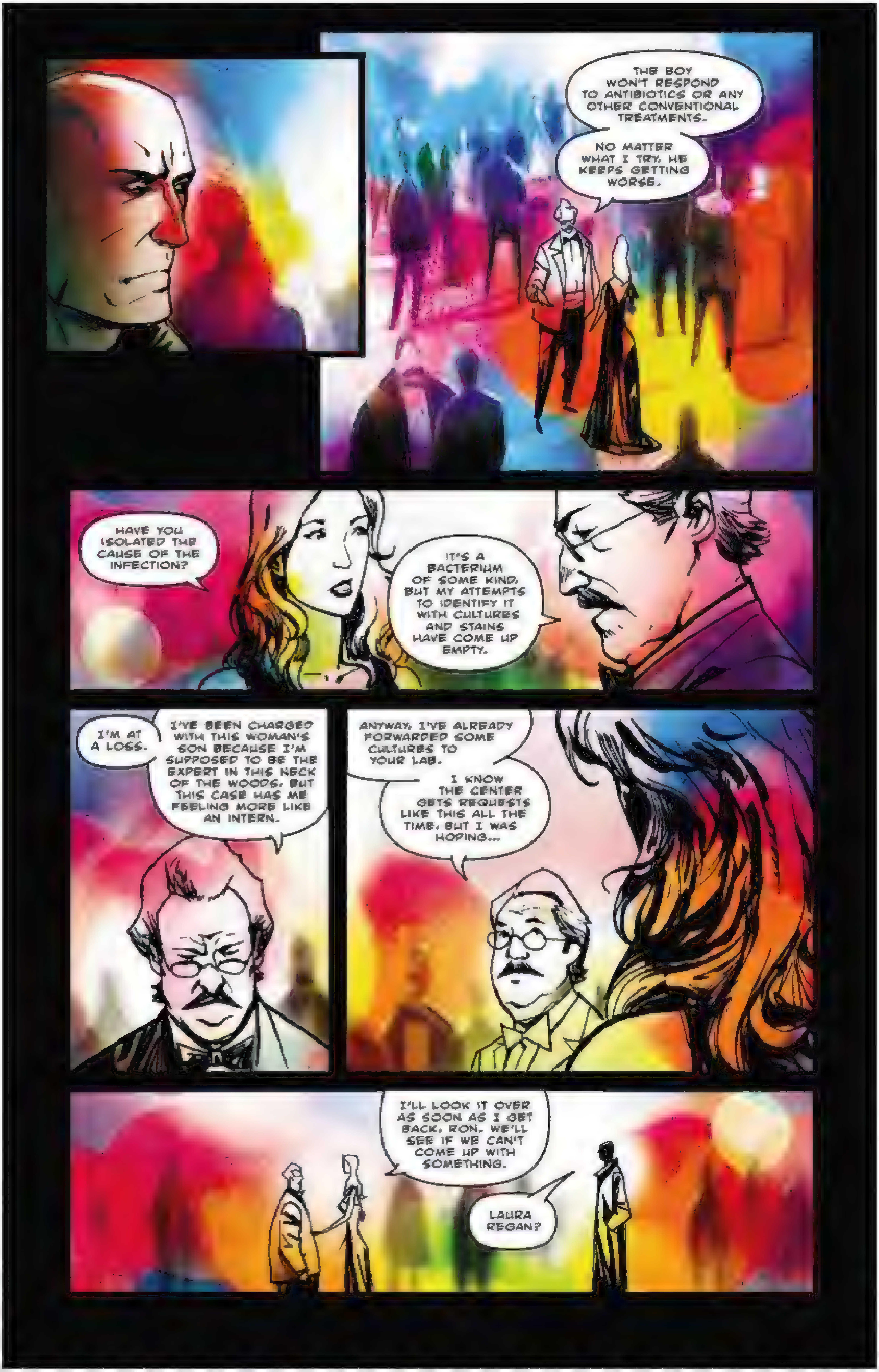

GOOD.
VERY GOOD ...
H JGO HAA
YEAH,
REALLY NICE
PHOTOS.

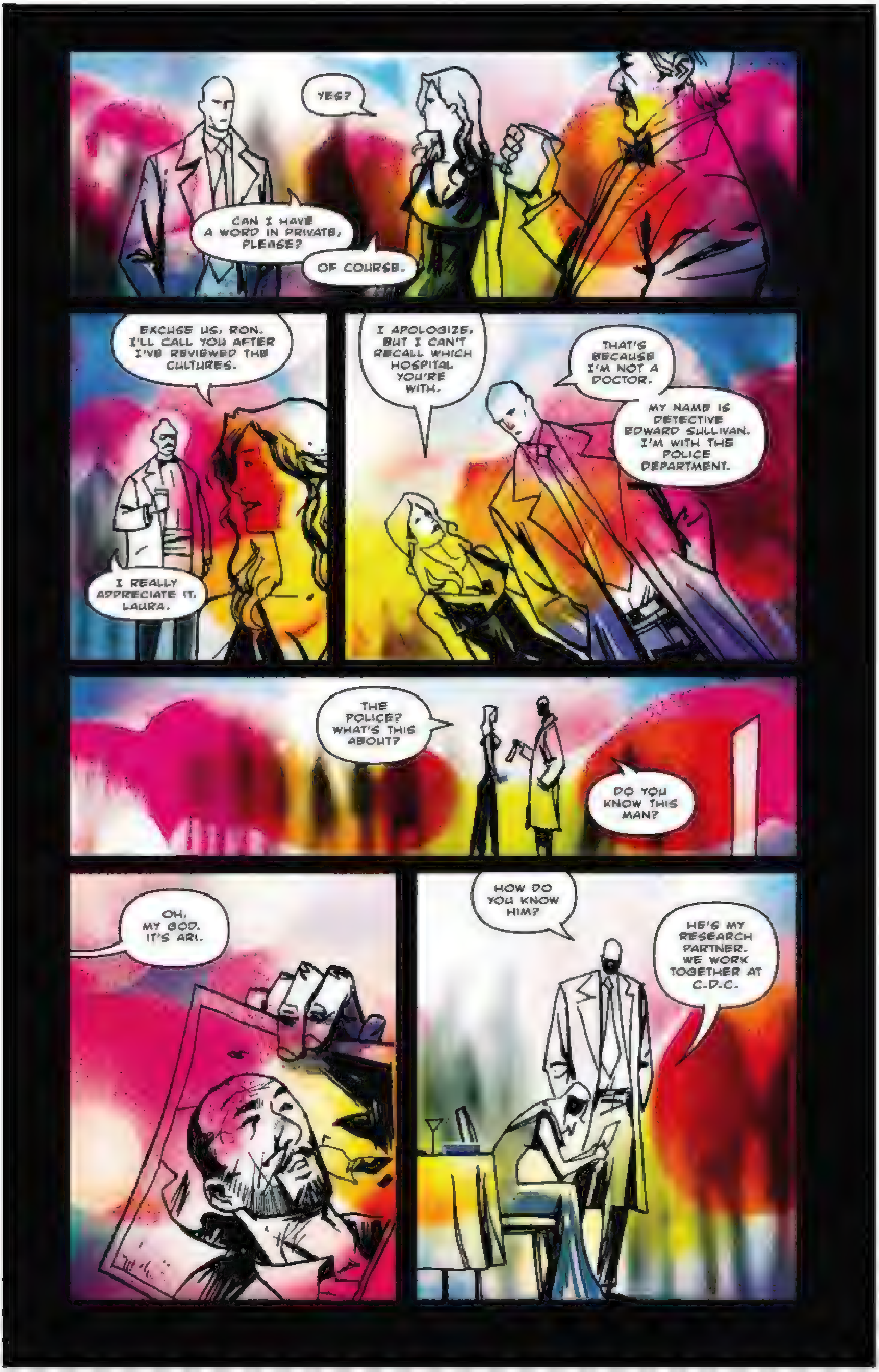

LOOK AT THE SIZE OF THE THING!
I'VE NEVER SEEN A PICTURE THIS BIG.
CHRIST! ME NEITHER.
JOHN, YOU'RE LOOKING DEAD GOOD IN THIS ONE.
YEAH AND ME AN' ALL!
GIZZA LOOK, WILL YER ...
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT'S US.
THEY'RE SIMPLY AMAZING, ASTRID.

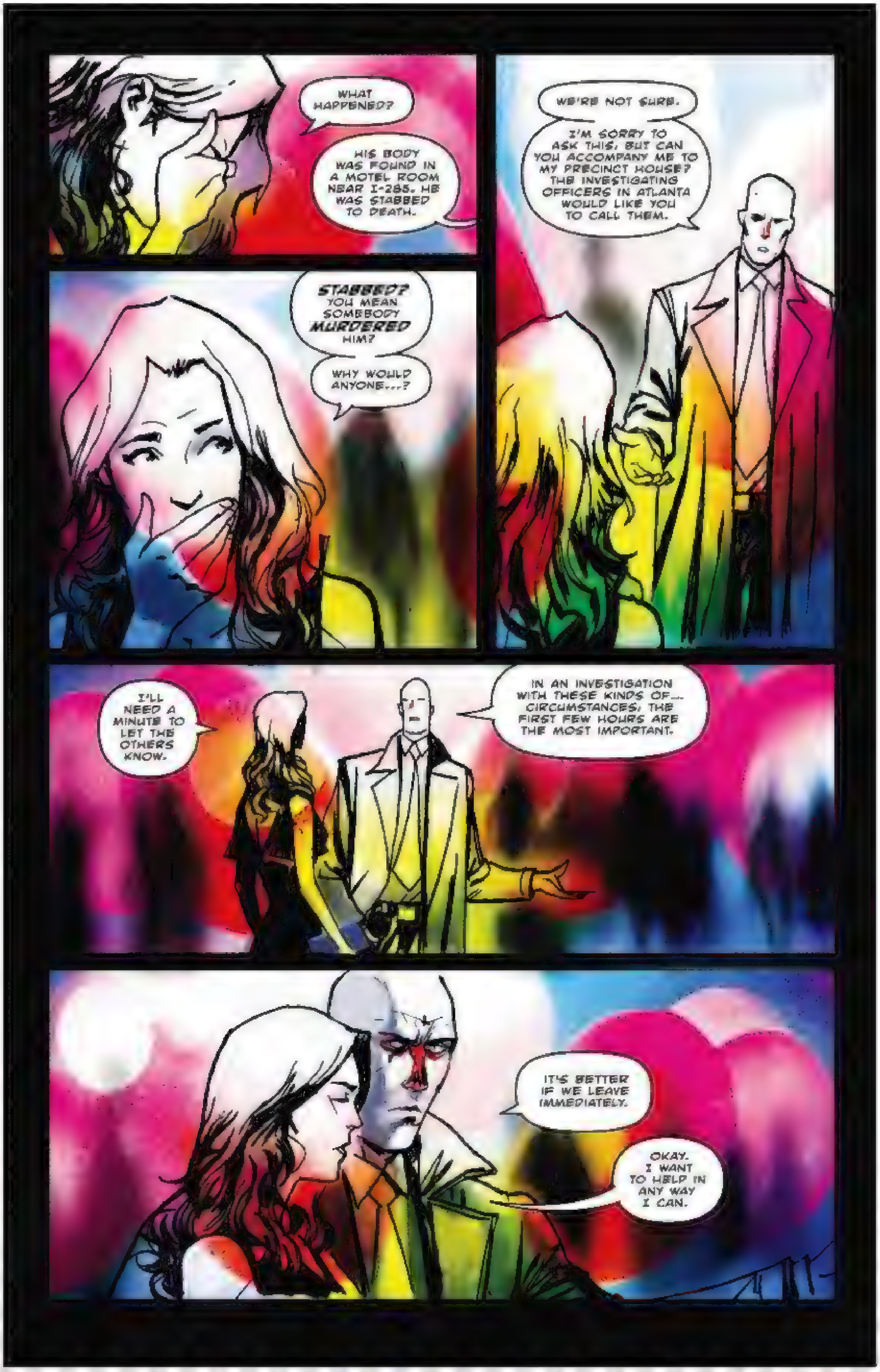

WELL, I GET THE FEELING THEY LIKE THEM A LOT.
YOUR PHOTOS TURNED OUT REALLY GREAT. ESPECIALLY THE ONES ON THE TRACTOR.
AND, WELL ... IT HAS TO BE SAID, YOUR SUBJECTS ARE VERY PHOTOGENIC ...
YEAH. I'D LIKE TO DO SOME MORE PICTURES OF THEM.

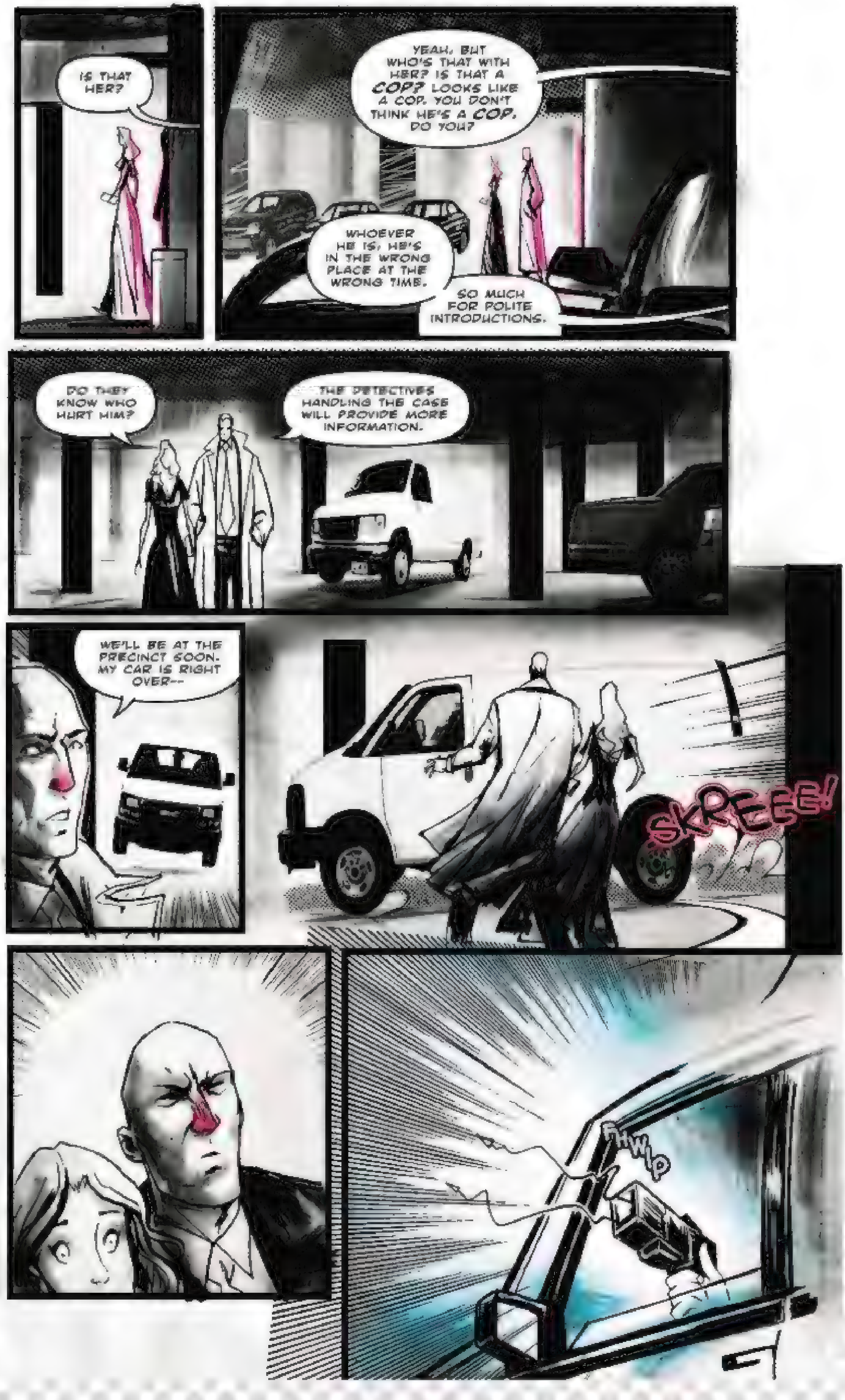

NORTHGATE PENITENTIARY

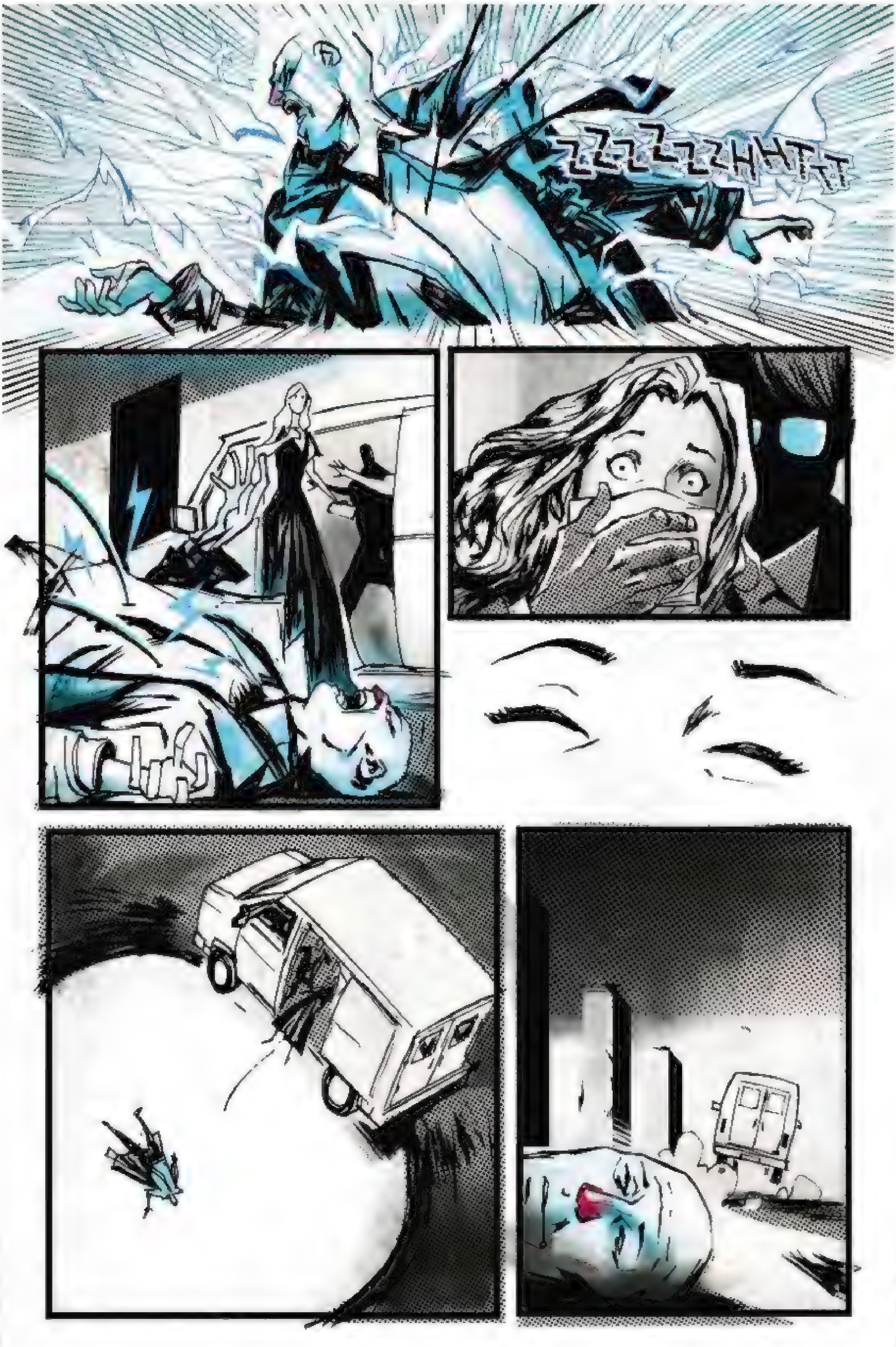

CLICK
OPENING!
THERE'S A FIRE BURNING IN MY BRAIN!

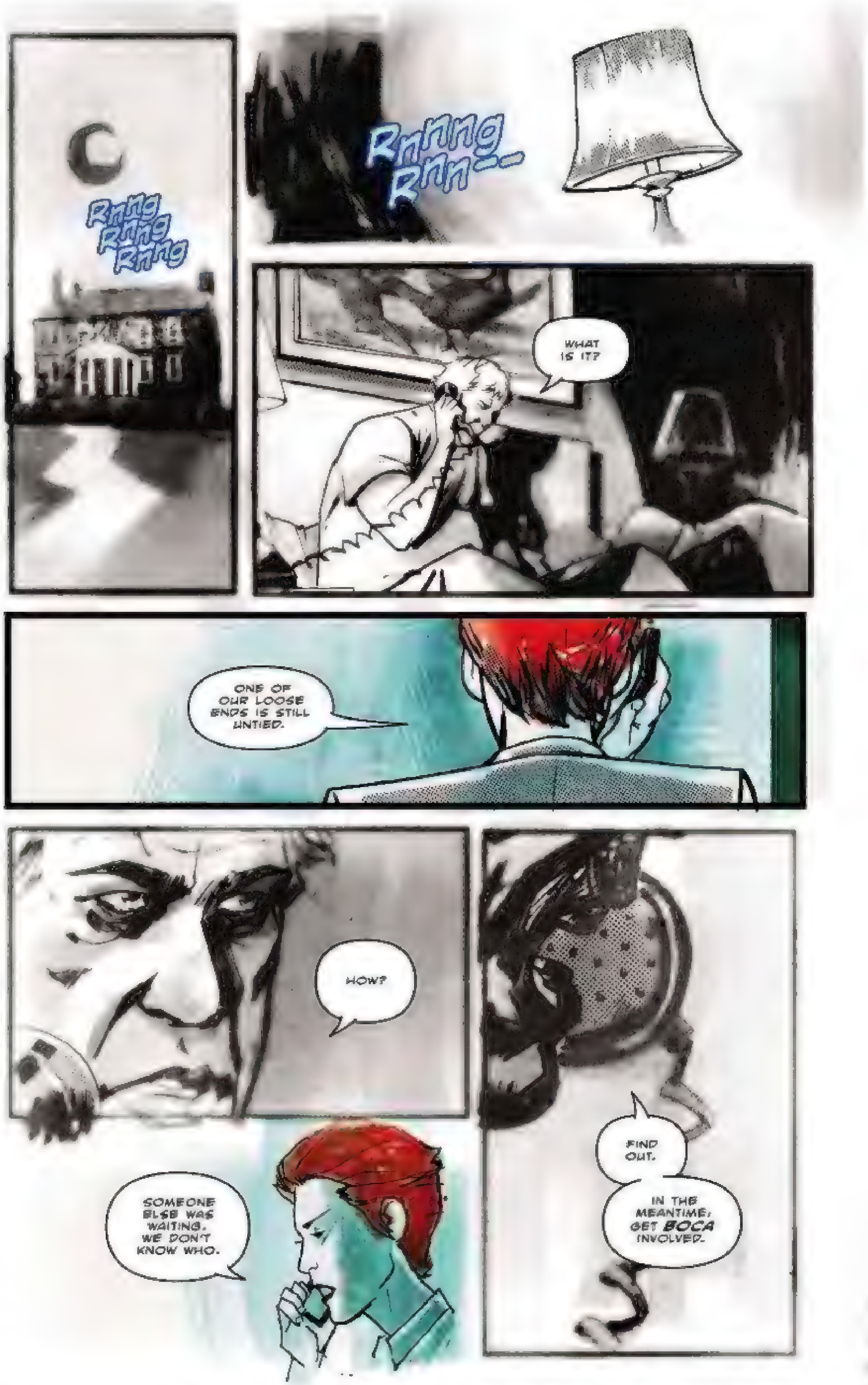

THE BOY WON'T RESPOND TO ANTIBIOTICS OR ANY OTHER CONVENTIONAL TREATMENTS.
NO MATTER WHAT I TRY, HE KEEPS GETTING WORSE.
HAVE YOU ISOLATED THE CAUSE OF THE INFECTION?
IT'S A BACTERIUM OF SOME KIND, BUT MY ATTEMPTS TO IDENTIFY IT WITH CULTURES AND STAINS HAVE COME UP EMPTY.
I'M AT A LOSS.
I'VE BEEN CHARGED WITH THIS WOMAN'S SON BECAUSE I'M SUPPOSED TO BE THE EXPERT IN THIS NECK OF THE WOODS, BUT THIS CASE HAS ME FEELING MORE LIKE AN INTERN.
ANYWAY, I'VE ALREADY FORWARDED SOME CULTURES TO YOUR LAB.
I KNOW THE CENTER GETS REQUESTS LIKE THIS ALL THE TIME, BUT I WAS HOPING...
I'LL LOOK IT OVER AS SOON AS I GET BACK, RON. WE'LL SEE IF WE CAN'T COME UP WITH SOMETHING.
LAURA REGAN?

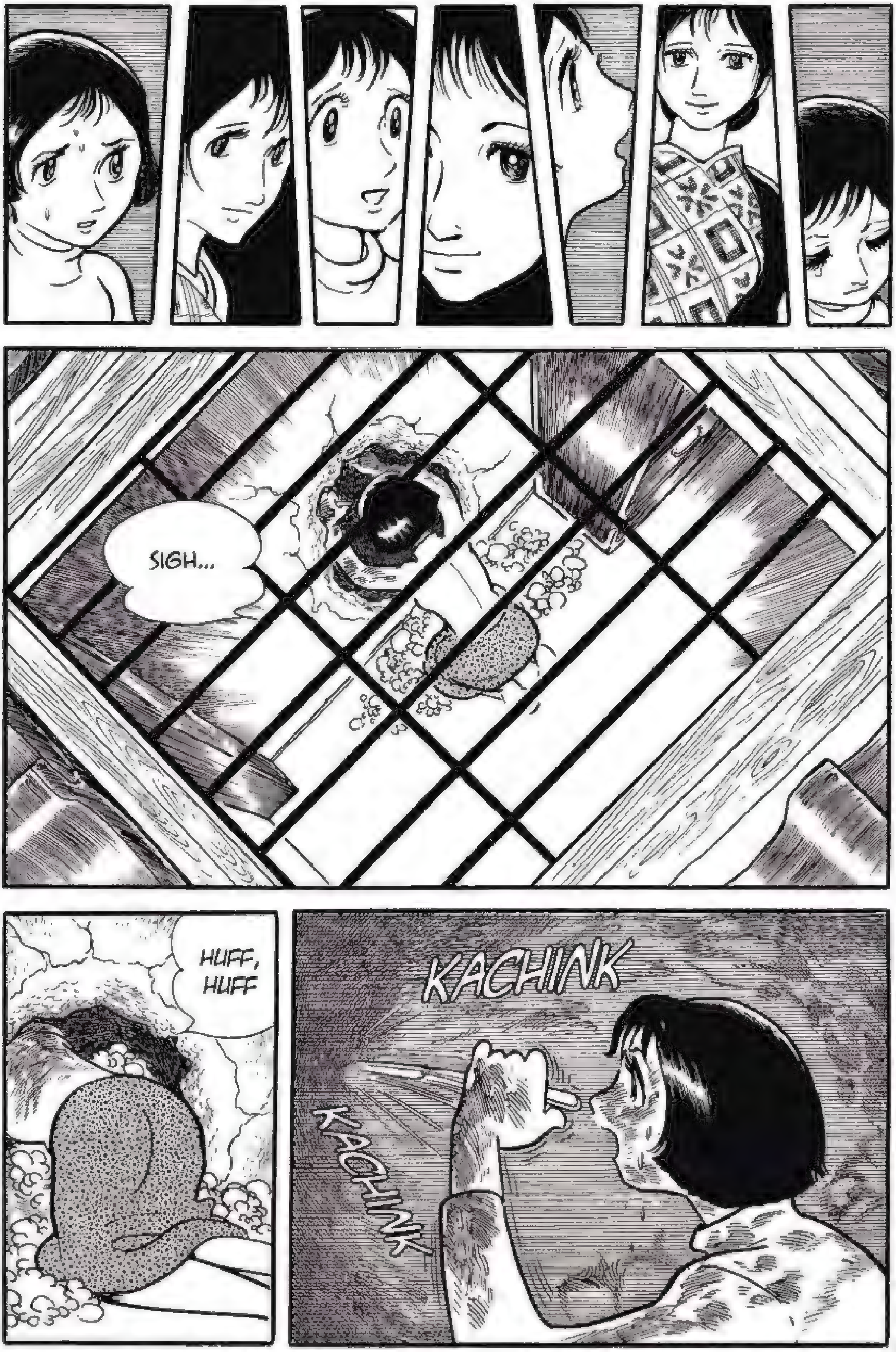

YES?
CAN I HAVE A WORD IN PRIVATE, PLEASE?
OF COURSE.
EXCUSE US, RON. I'LL CALL YOU AFTER I'VE REVIEWED THE CULTURES.
I REALLY APPRECIATE IT, LAURA.
I APOLOGIZE, BUT I CAN'T RECALL WHICH HOSPITAL YOU'RE WITH.
THAT'S BECAUSE I'M NOT A DOCTOR.
MY NAME IS DETECTIVE EDWARD SULLIVAN. I'M WITH THE POLICE DEPARTMENT.
THE POLICE? WHAT'S THIS ABOUT?
DO YOU KNOW THIS MAN?
OH, MY GOD. IT'S ARI.
HOW DO YOU KNOW HIM?
HE'S MY RESEARCH PARTNER. WE WORK TOGETHER AT C.D.C.

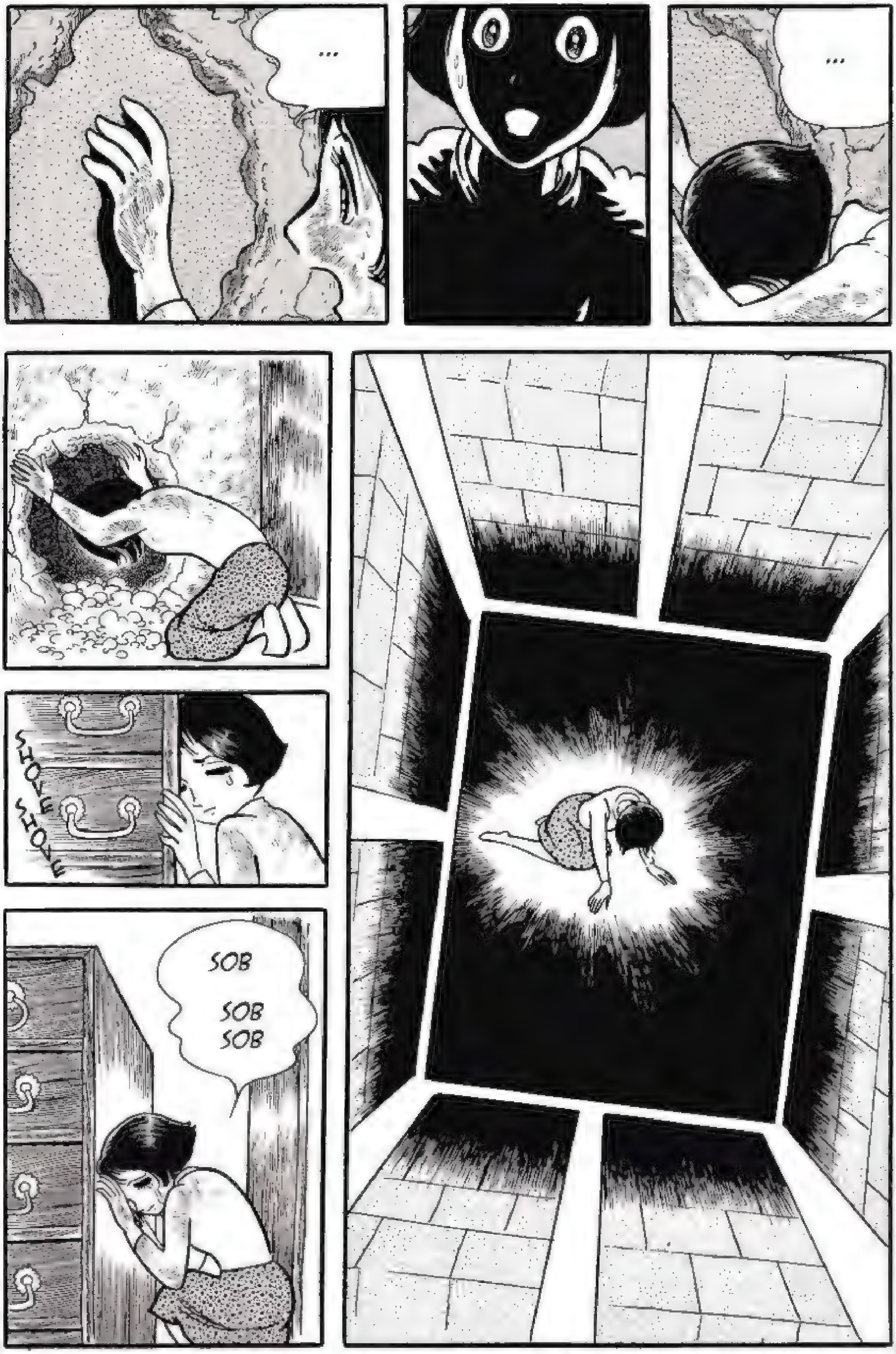

WHAT HAPPENED?
HIS BODY WAS FOUND IN A MOTEL ROOM NEAR I-285. HE WAS STABBED TO DEATH.
STABBED? YOU MEAN SOMEBODY MURDERED HIM?
WHY WOULD ANYONE...?
WE'RE NOT SURE.
I'M SORRY TO ASK THIS, BUT CAN YOU ACCOMPANY ME TO MY PRECINCT HOUSE? THE INVESTIGATING OFFICERS IN ATLANTA WOULD LIKE YOU TO CALL THEM.
I'LL NEED A MINUTE TO LET THE OTHERS KNOW.
IN AN INVESTIGATION WITH THESE KINDS OF... CIRCUMSTANCES, THE FIRST FEW HOURS ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT.
IT'S BETTER IF WE LEAVE IMMEDIATELY.
OKAY. I WANT TO HELP IN ANY WAY I CAN.

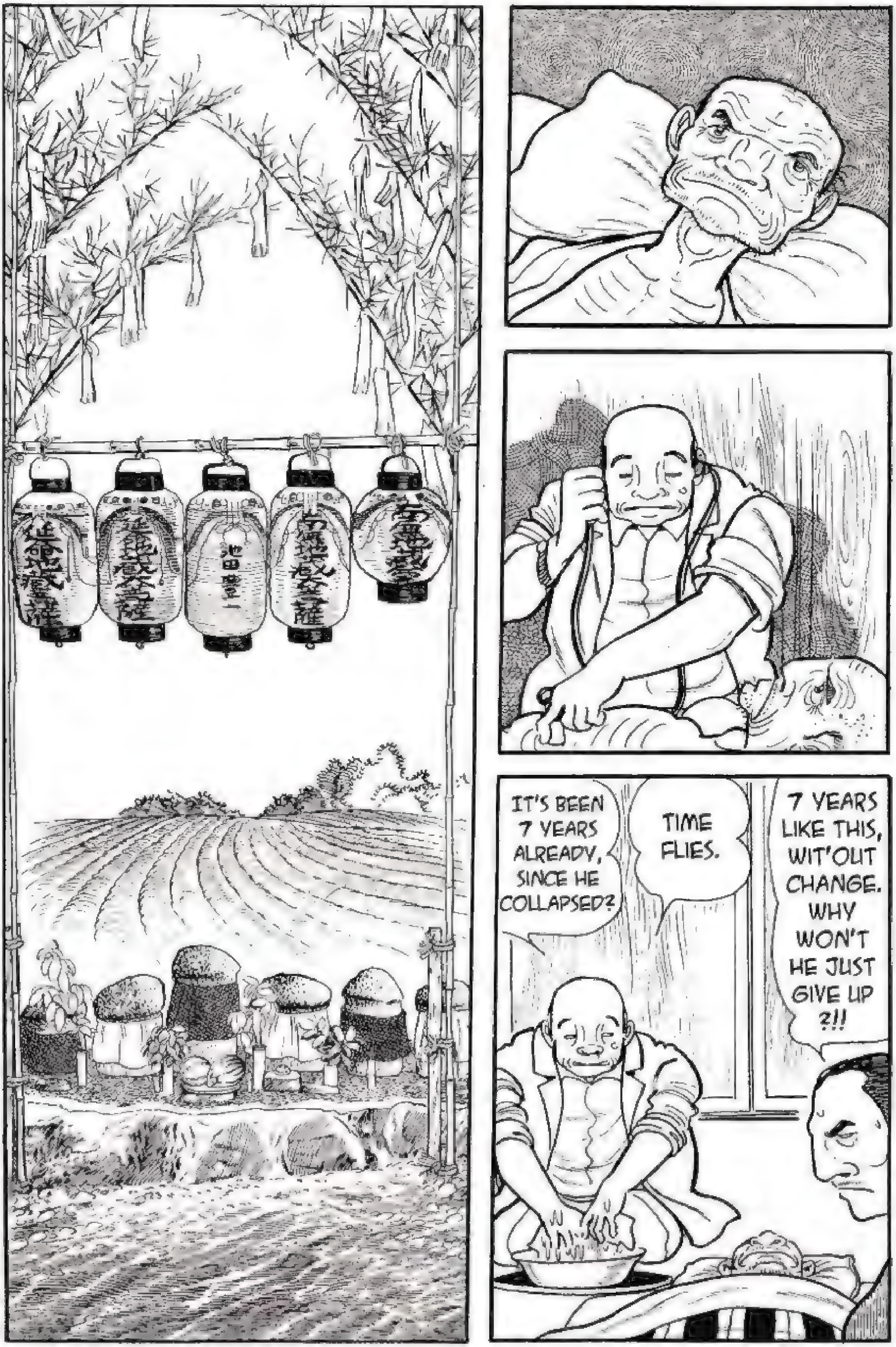

IS THAT HER?
YEAH, BUT WHO'S THAT WITH HER? IS THAT A COP? LOOKS LIKE A COP. YOU DON'T THINK HE'S A COP, DO YOU?
WHOEVER HE IS, HE'S IN THE WRONG PLACE AT THE WRONG TIME.
SO MUCH FOR POLITE INTRODUCTIONS.
DO THEY KNOW WHO HURT HIM?
THE DETECTIVES HANDLING THE CASE WILL PROVIDE MORE INFORMATION.
WE'LL BE AT THE PRECINCT SOON. MY CAR IS RIGHT OVER--
SKREEE!
FHWIP

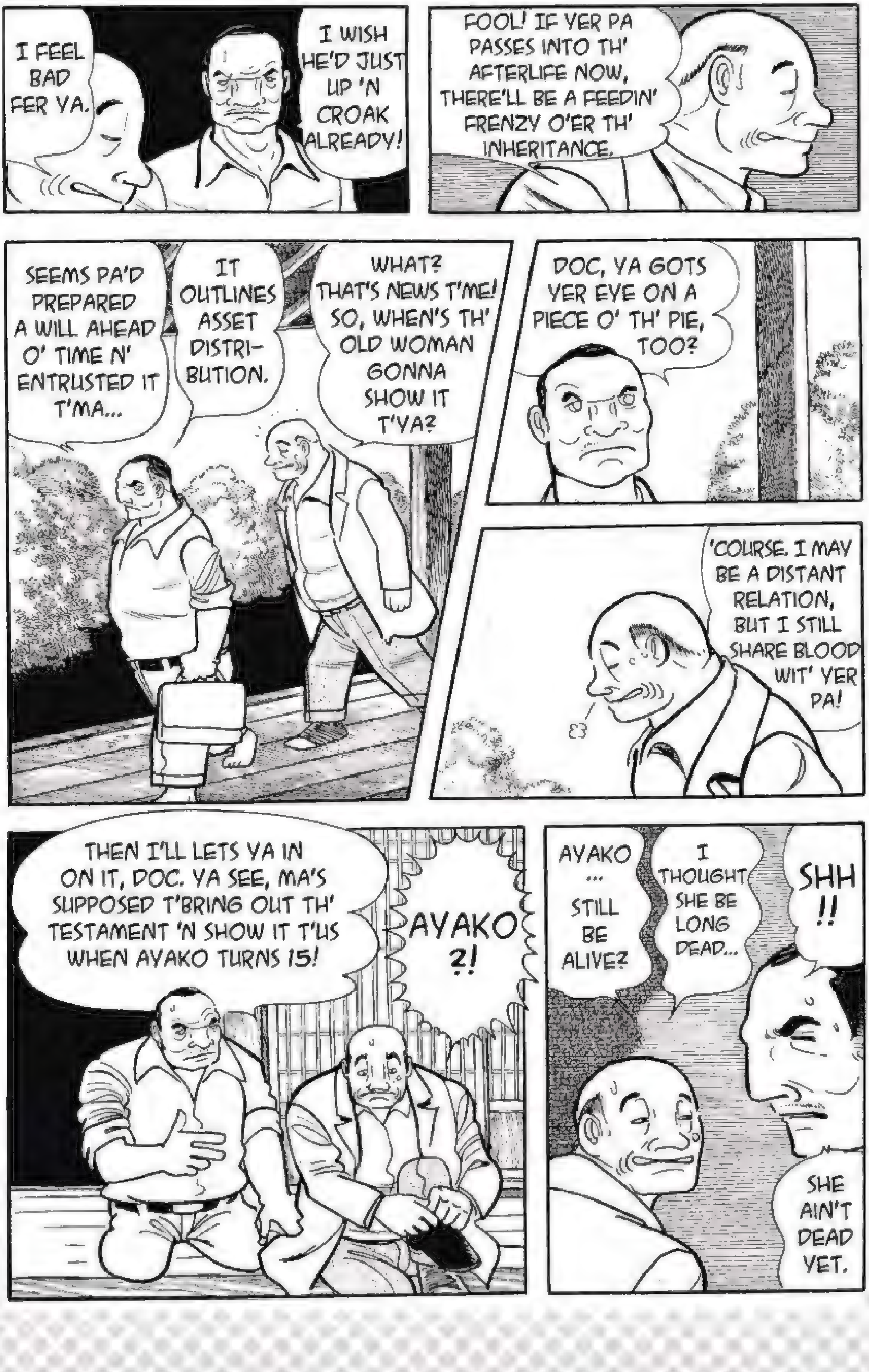

ZZZZZZHHTTT

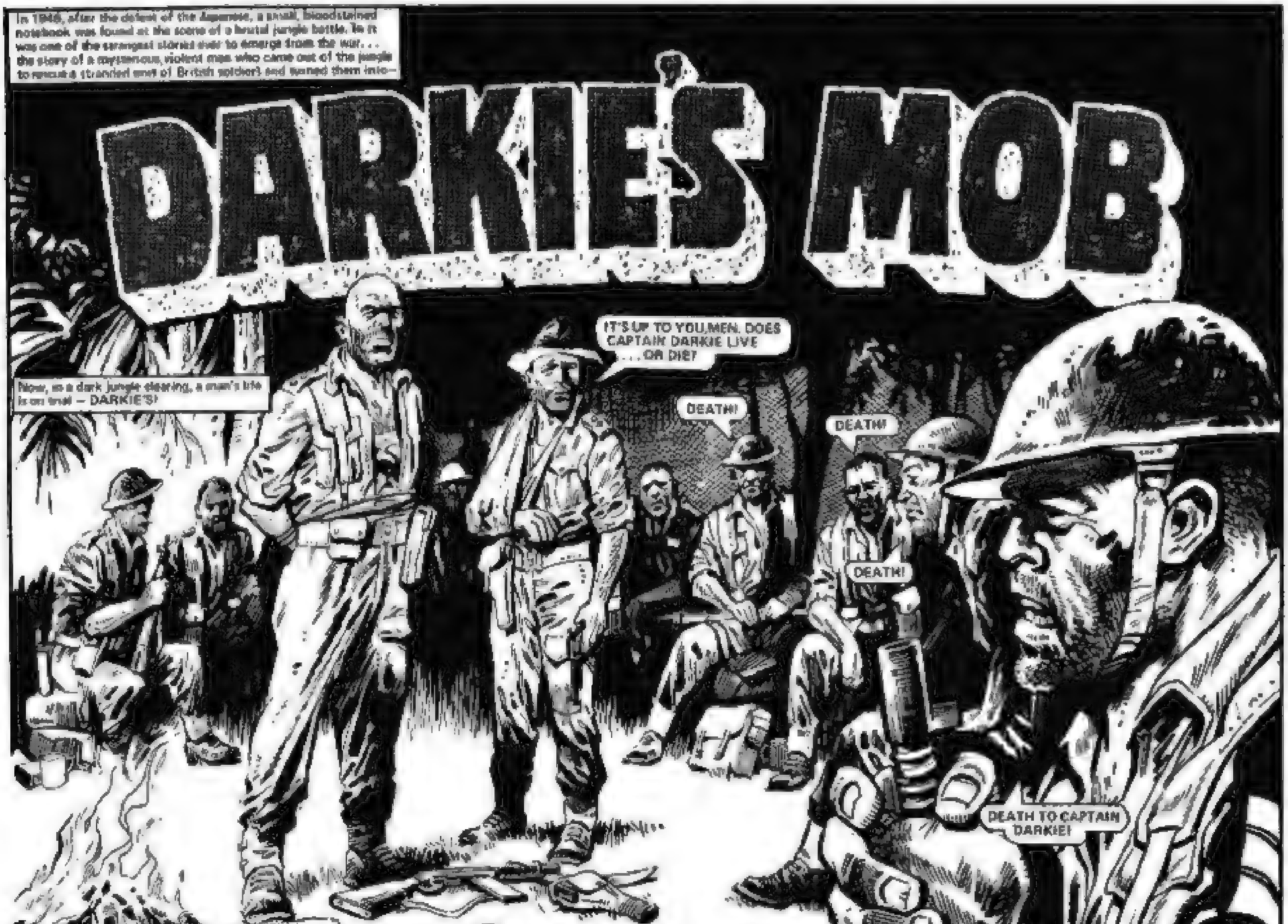

Rnng Rnng Rnng
Rnnng Rnn--
WHAT IS IT?
ONE OF OUR LOOSE ENDS IS STILL UNTIED.
HOW?
SOMEONE ELSE WAS WAITING. WE DON'T KNOW WHO.
FIND OUT.
IN THE MEANTIME, GET *BOCA* INVOLVED.

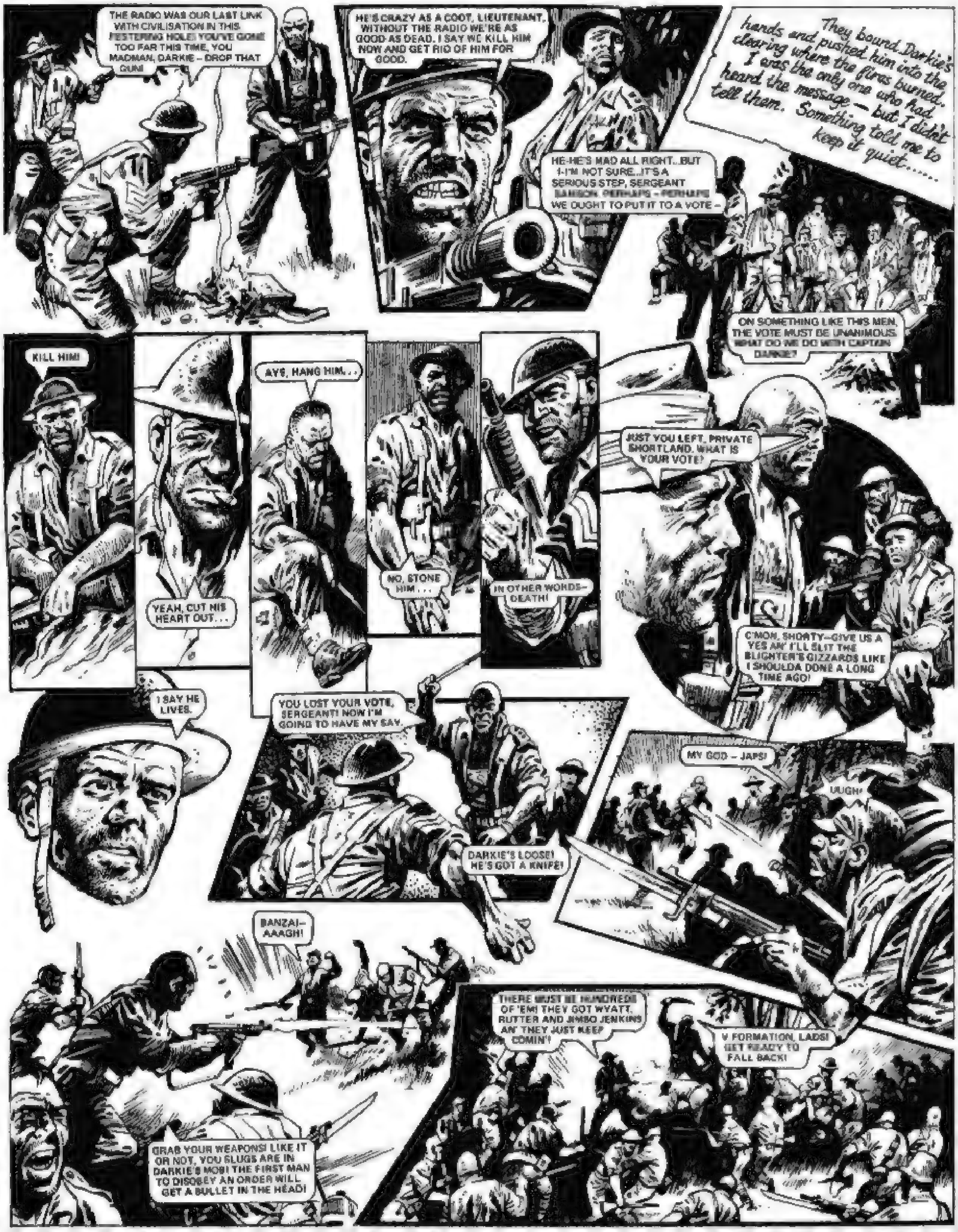

SIGH...
HUFF, HUFF
KACHINK
KACHINK

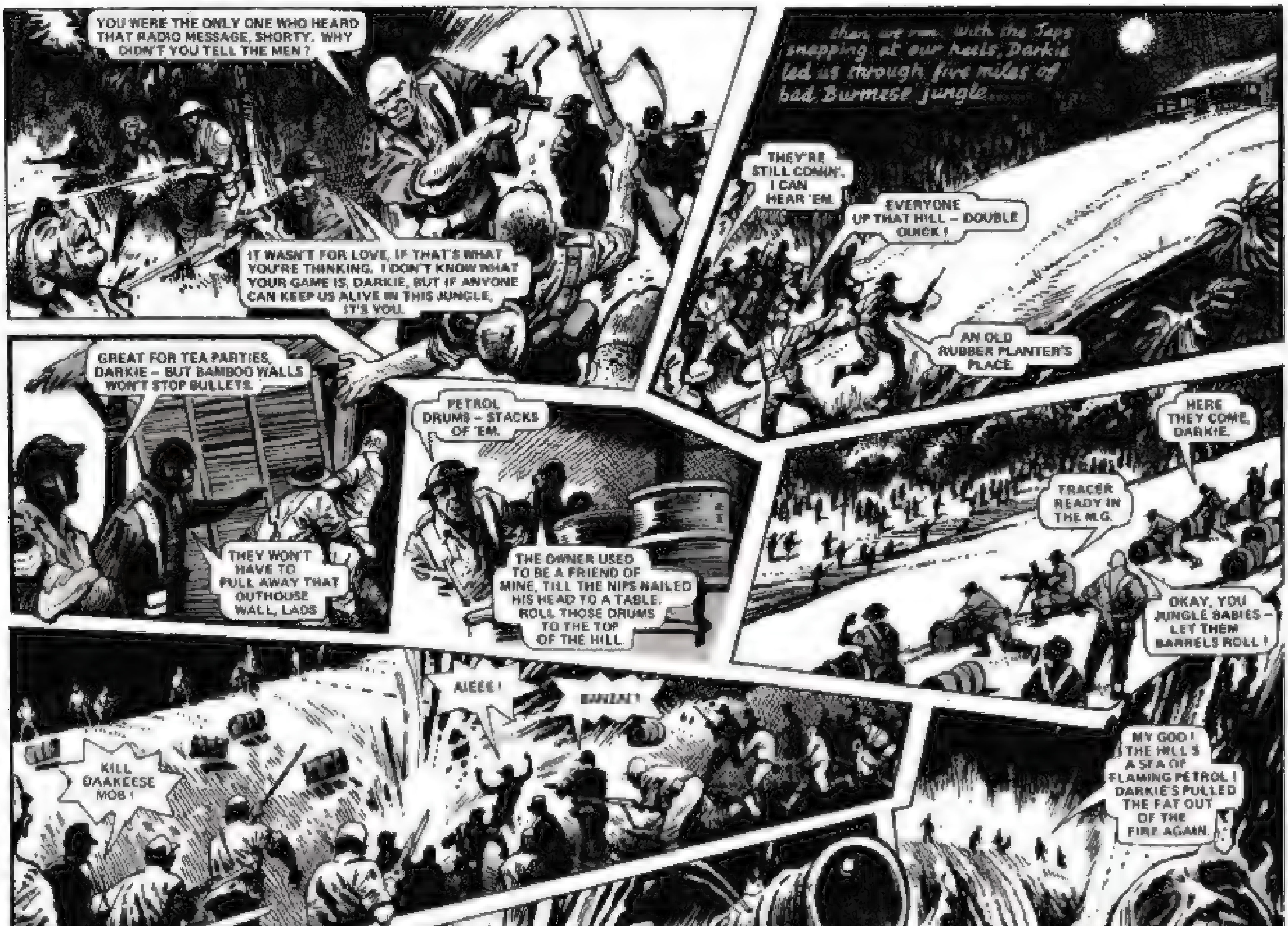

...
...
SHOVE SHOVE
SOB SOB SOB

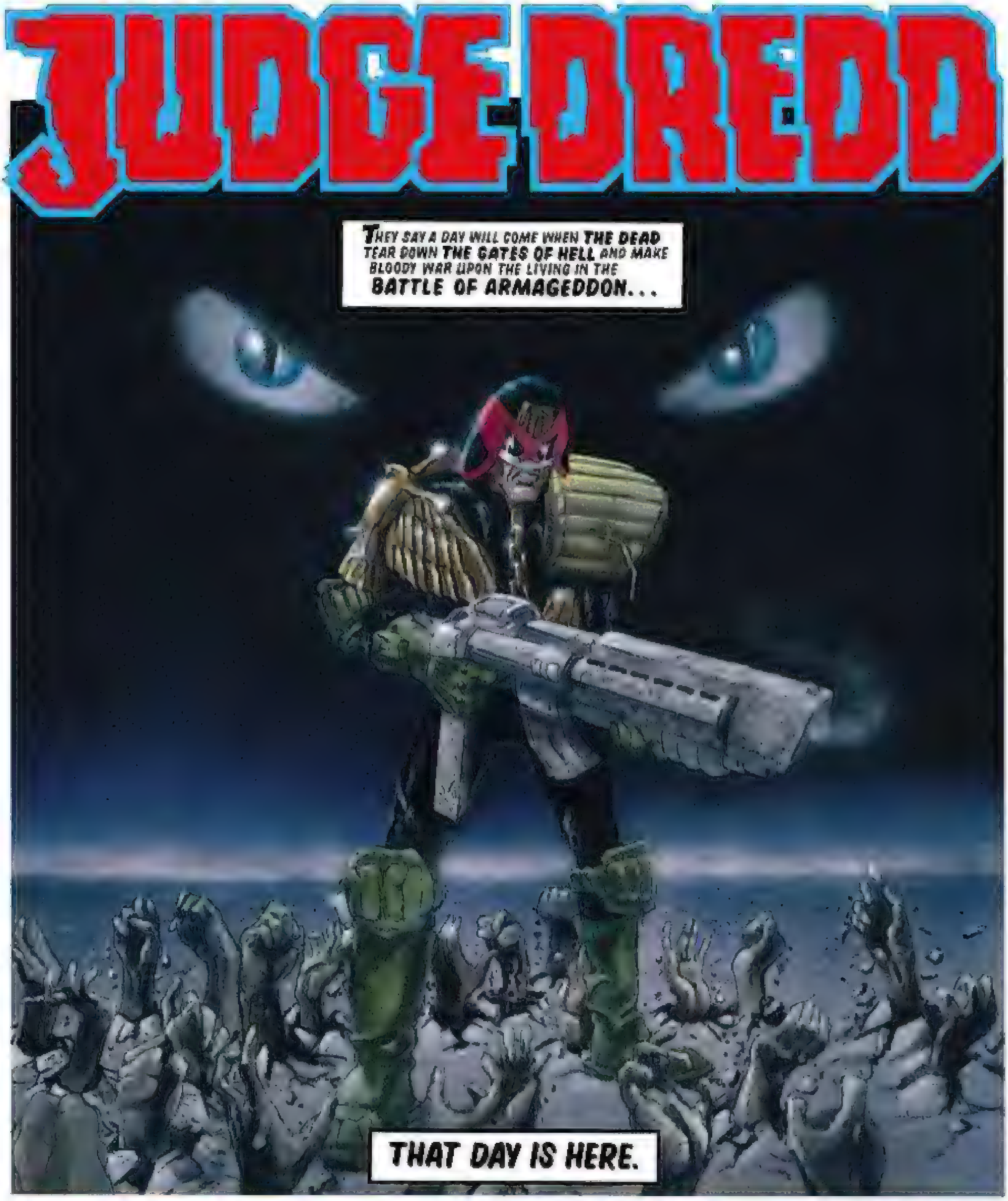

池田豊一
IT'S BEEN 7 YEARS ALREADY, SINCE HE COLLAPSED?
TIME FLIES.
7 YEARS LIKE THIS, WIT'OUT CHANGE. WHY WON'T HE JUST GIVE UP ?!!


I FEEL BAD FER YA.
I WISH HE'D JUST UP 'N CROAK ALREADY!
FOOL! IF YER PA PASSES INTO TH' AFTERLIFE NOW, THERE'LL BE A FEEDIN' FRENZY O'ER TH' INHERITANCE.
SEEMS PA'D PREPARED A WILL AHEAD O' TIME N' ENTRUSTED IT T'MA...
IT OUTLINES ASSET DISTRIBUTION.
WHAT? THAT'S NEWS T'ME! SO, WHEN'S TH' OLD WOMAN GONNA SHOW IT T'YA?
DOC, YA GOTS YER EYE ON A PIECE O' TH' PIE, TOO?
'COURSE. I MAY BE A DISTANT RELATION, BUT I STILL SHARE BLOOD WIT' YER PA!
THEN I'LL LETS YA IN ON IT, DOC. YA SEE, MA'S SUPPOSED T'BRING OUT TH' TESTAMENT 'N SHOW IT T'US WHEN AYAKO TURNS 15!
AYAKO ?!
AYAKO... STILL BE ALIVE?
I THOUGHT SHE BE LONG DEAD...
SHH !!
SHE AIN'T DEAD YET.


In 1946, after the defeat of the Japanese, a small, bloodstained notebook was found at the scene of a brutal jungle battle. In it was one of the strangest stories ever to emerge from the war... the story of a mysterious, violent man who came out of the jungle to rescue a stranded unit of British soldiers and turned them into—
DARKIE'S MOB
Now, in a dark jungle clearing, a man's life is on trial — DARKIE'S!
IT'S UP TO YOU, MEN. DOES CAPTAIN DARKIE LIVE ...OR DIE?
DEATH!
DEATH!
DEATH!
DEATH TO CAPTAIN DARKIE!
From the Battle-log of Private Richard Shortland.
It all started with the radio message. Captain Darkie had led us deep into Jap territory to fight.
Now it seemed he wasn't even a soldier......
THERE IS NO CAPTAIN DARKIE IN THE ENTIRE BRITISH ARMY... REPEAT—NO CAPTAIN DARKIE!
CAPTAIN DARKIE, WHAT THE HELL'S GOING ON—?
THOUGHT I SAW SOMETHIN' MOVE, LIEUTENANT MEEKER. MUST BE MY EYES.
THE RADIO!

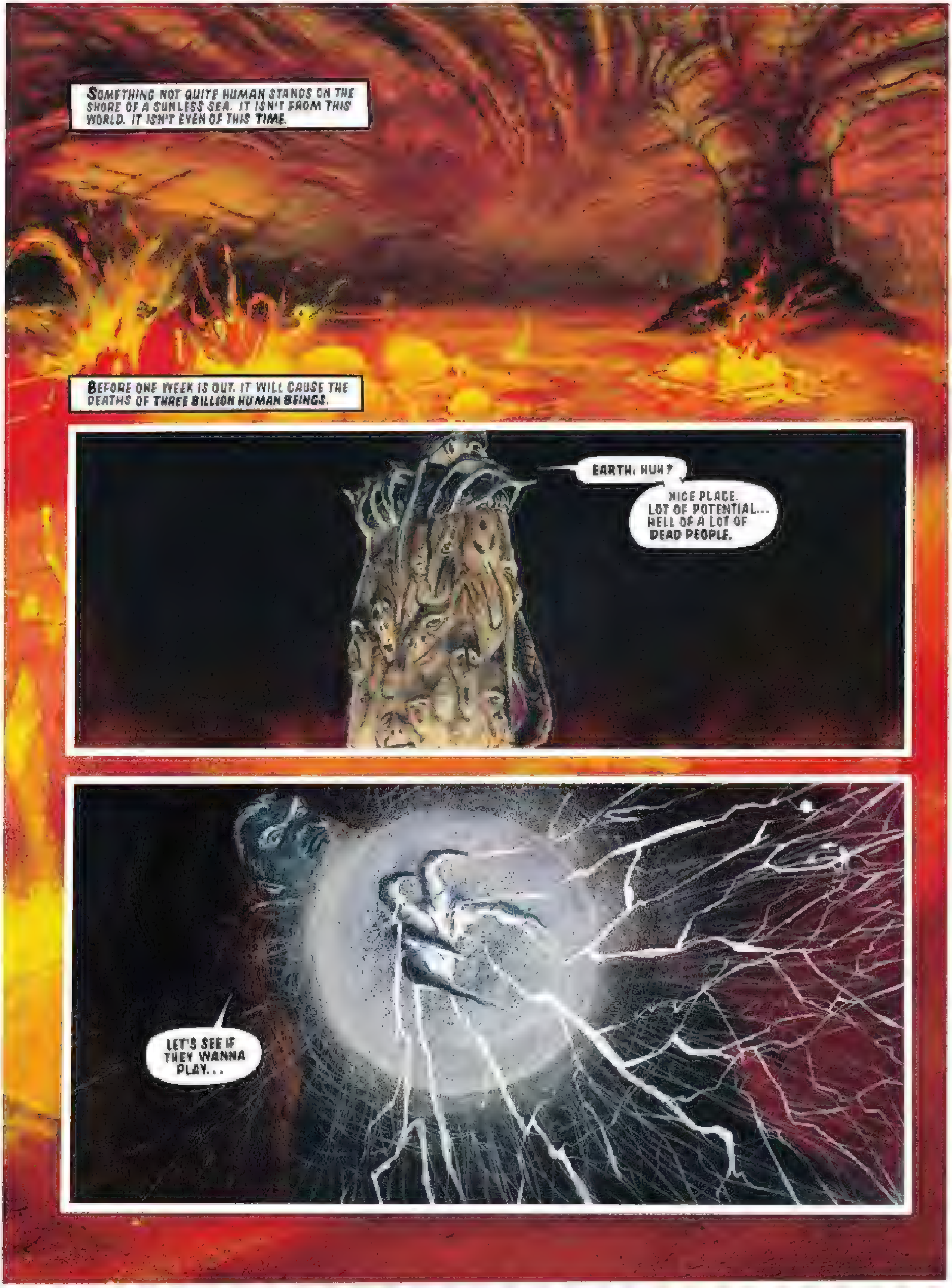

THE RADIO WAS OUR LAST LINK WITH CIVILISATION IN THIS FESTERING HOLE! YOU'VE GONE TOO FAR THIS TIME, YOU MADMAN, DARKIE – DROP THAT GUN!
HE'S CRAZY AS A COOT, LIEUTENANT. WITHOUT THE RADIO WE'RE AS GOOD AS DEAD. I SAY WE KILL HIM NOW AND GET RID OF HIM FOR GOOD.
HE-HE'S MAD ALL RIGHT...BUT I-I'M NOT SURE...IT'S A SERIOUS STEP, SERGEANT SAMSON. PERHAPS – PERHAPS WE OUGHT TO PUT IT TO A VOTE –
They bound Darkie's hands and pushed him into the clearing where the fires burned. I was the only one who had heard the message — but I didn't tell them. Something told me to keep it quiet......
ON SOMETHING LIKE THIS MEN, THE VOTE MUST BE UNANIMOUS. WHAT DO WE DO WITH CAPTAIN DARKIE?
KILL HIM!
YEAH, CUT HIS HEART OUT...
AYE, HANG HIM...
NO, STONE HIM...
IN OTHER WORDS– DEATH!
JUST YOU LEFT, PRIVATE SHORTLAND. WHAT IS YOUR VOTE?
C'MON, SHORTY–GIVE US A YES AN' I'LL SLIT THE BLIGHTER'S GIZZARDS LIKE I SHOULDA DONE A LONG TIME AGO!
I SAY HE LIVES.
YOU LOST YOUR VOTE, SERGEANT! NOW I'M GOING TO HAVE MY SAY.
DARKIE'S LOOSE! HE'S GOT A KNIFE!
MY GOD – JAPS!
UUGH!
BANZAI– AAAGH!
THERE MUST BE HUNDREDS OF 'EM! THEY GOT WYATT, RUTTER AND JIMBO JENKINS AN' THEY JUST KEEP COMIN'!
V FORMATION, LADS! GET READY TO FALL BACK!
GRAB YOUR WEAPONS! LIKE IT OR NOT, YOU SLUGS ARE IN DARKIE'S MOB! THE FIRST MAN TO DISOBEY AN ORDER WILL GET A BULLET IN THE HEAD!

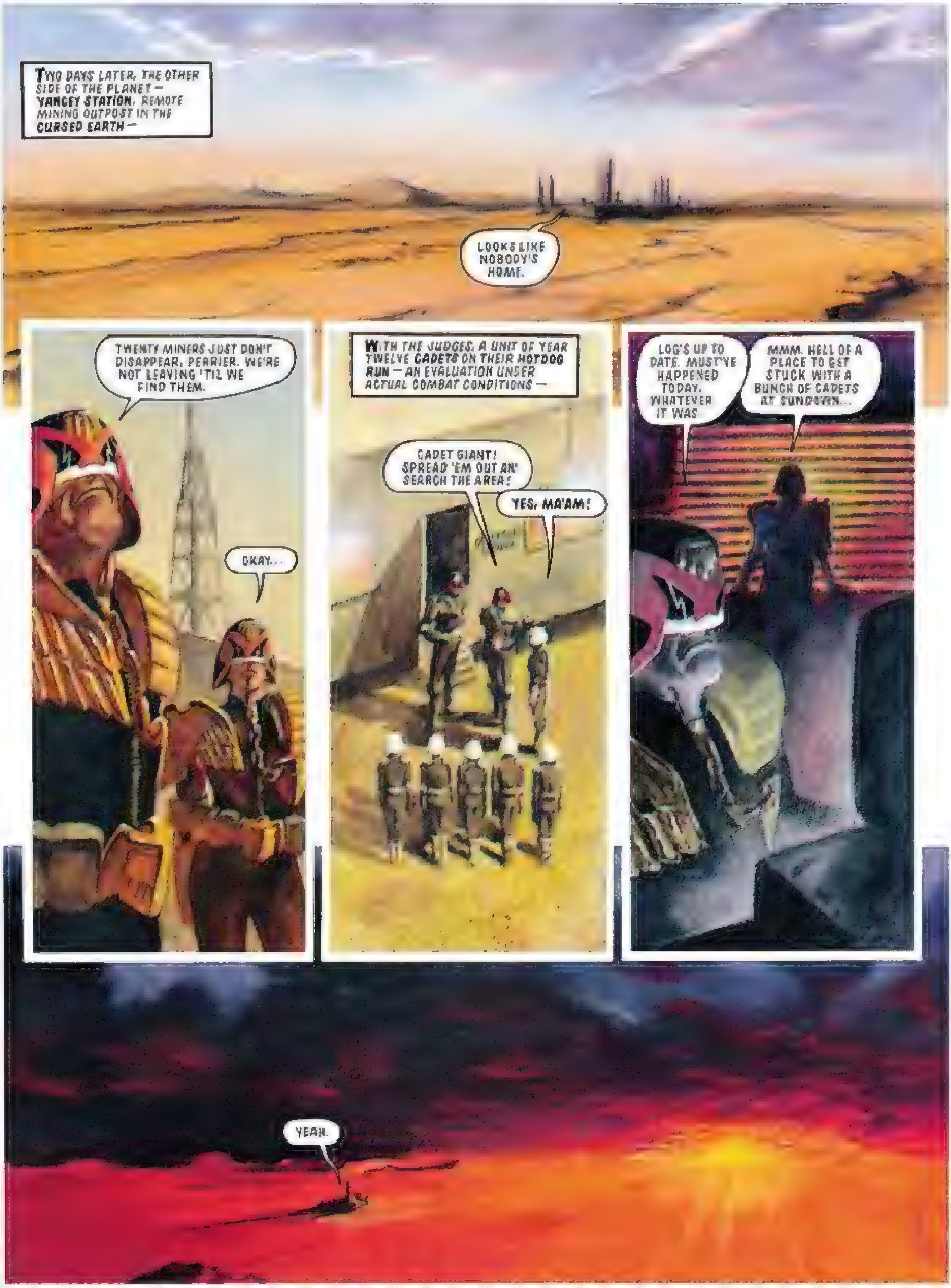

YOU WERE THE ONLY ONE WHO HEARD THAT RADIO MESSAGE, SHORTY. WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL THE MEN?
IT WASN'T FOR LOVE, IF THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE THINKING. I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOUR GAME IS, DARKIE, BUT IF ANYONE CAN KEEP US ALIVE IN THIS JUNGLE, IT'S YOU.
then we ran. With the Japs snapping at our heels, Darkie led us through five miles of bad Burmese jungle......
THEY'RE STILL COMIN'. I CAN HEAR 'EM.
EVERYONE UP THAT HILL – DOUBLE QUICK!
AN OLD RUBBER PLANTER'S PLACE.
GREAT FOR TEA PARTIES, DARKIE – BUT BAMBOO WALLS WON'T STOP BULLETS.
THEY WON'T HAVE TO PULL AWAY THAT OUTHOUSE WALL, LADS
PETROL DRUMS – STACKS OF 'EM.
THE OWNER USED TO BE A FRIEND OF MINE, TILL THE NIPS NAILED HIS HEAD TO A TABLE. ROLL THOSE DRUMS TO THE TOP OF THE HILL.
HERE THEY COME, DARKIE.
TRACER READY IN THE M.G.
OKAY, YOU JUNGLE BABIES – LET THEM BARRELS ROLL!
AIEEE!
BANZAI!
KILL DAAKEESE MOB!
MY GOD! THE HILL'S A SEA OF FLAMING PETROL! DARKIE'S PULLED THE FAT OUT OF THE FIRE AGAIN.
FIRE – AIEEE!
AAAAGH!
YEAH, THE WHOLE LOT OF 'EM ARE FINISHED!
WE DIDN'T COME TO A TEA PARTY, SERGEANT – WE CAME TO A BARBECUE!
MIND YOU, THAT'S ONLY MY OPINION! PERHAPS WE OUGHT TO TAKE A VOTE ON IT!
The men think I betrayed them, but I did the right thing. We lost three men – but without Darkie, it would have been all of us......
BUT THAT STILL DOESN'T EXPLAIN OUR LEADER. WHERE DID HE COME FROM? WHY DOES HE HATE JAPS SO MUCH? WHO IS JOE DARKIE?

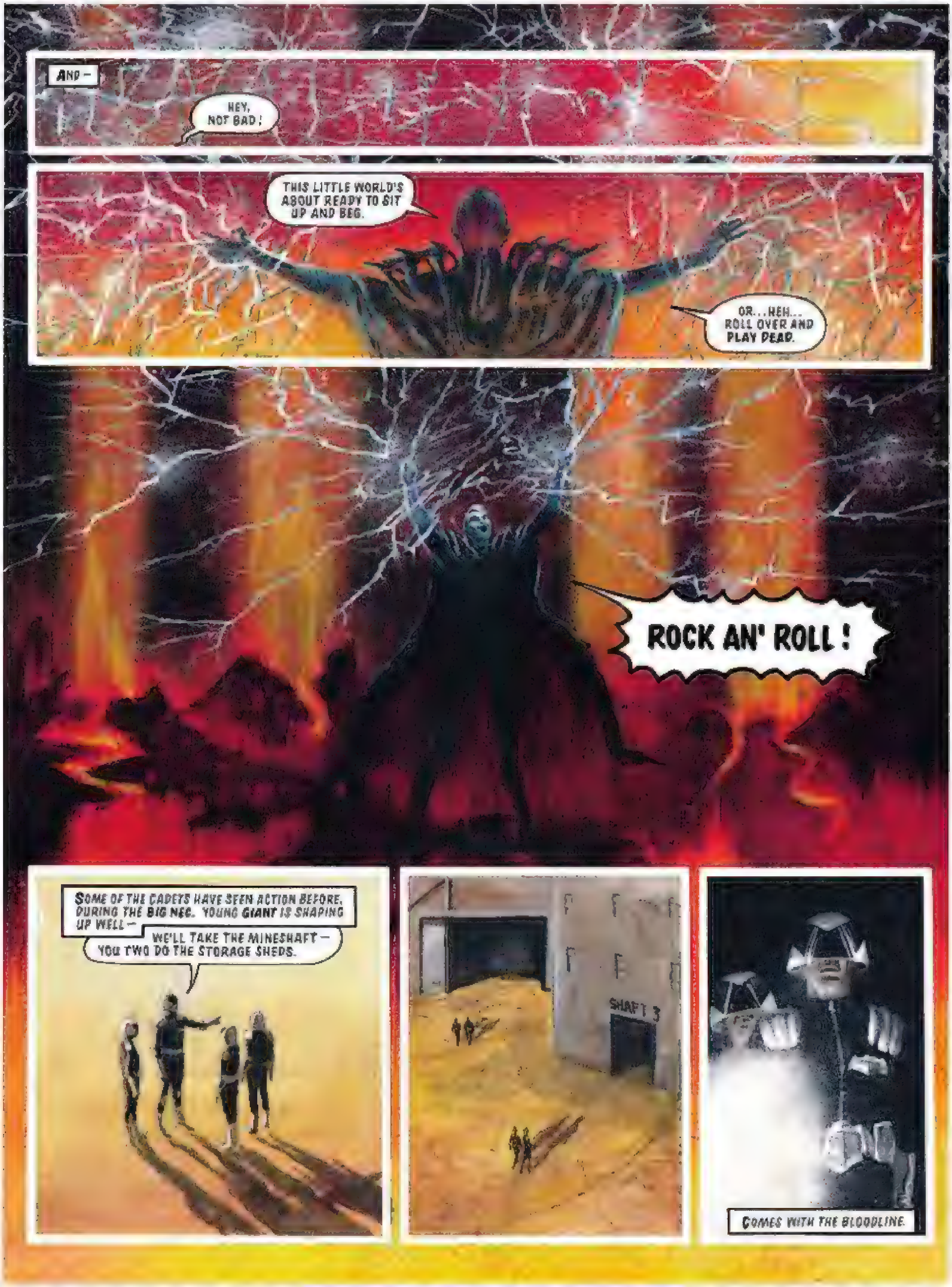

JUDGE DREDD
THEY SAY A DAY WILL COME WHEN THE DEAD TEAR DOWN THE GATES OF HELL AND MAKE BLOODY WAR UPON THE LIVING IN THE BATTLE OF ARMAGEDDON...
THAT DAY IS HERE.

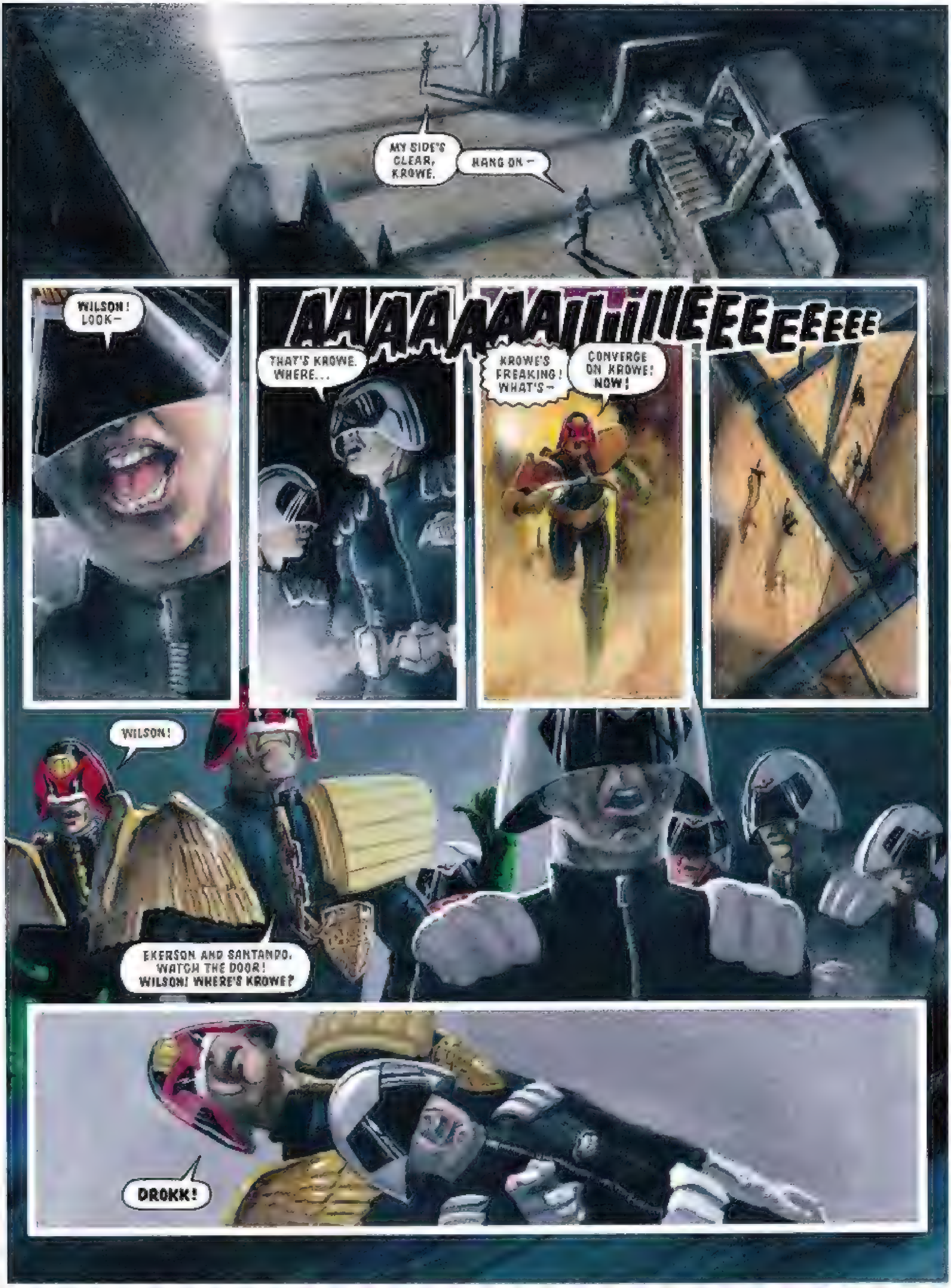
JUDGEMENT DAY

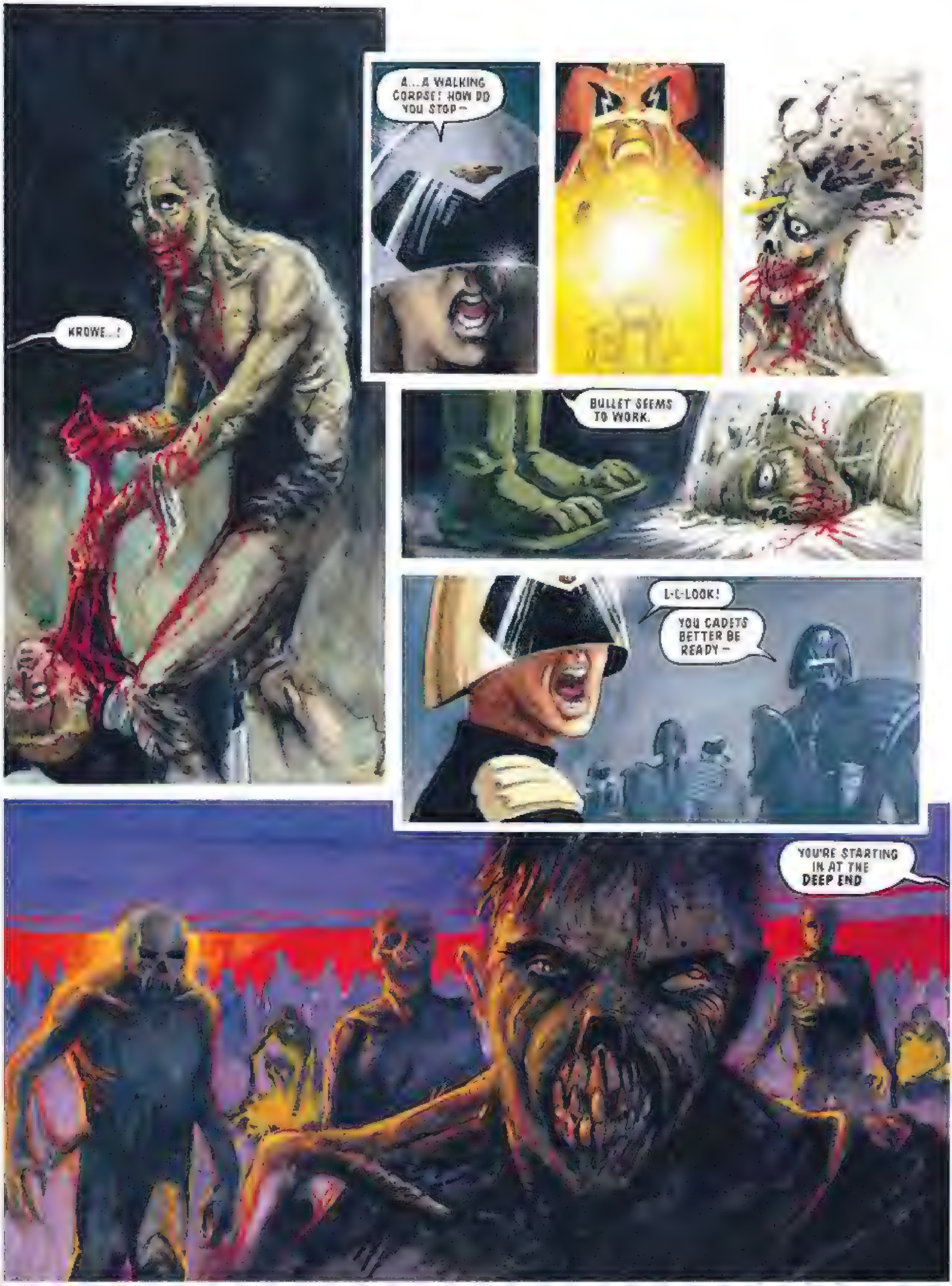
PLOT JOHN WAGNER & GARTH ENNIS ○ **SCRIPT** GARTH ENNIS ○ **ART** PETER DOHERTY ○ **LETTERS** TOM FRAME

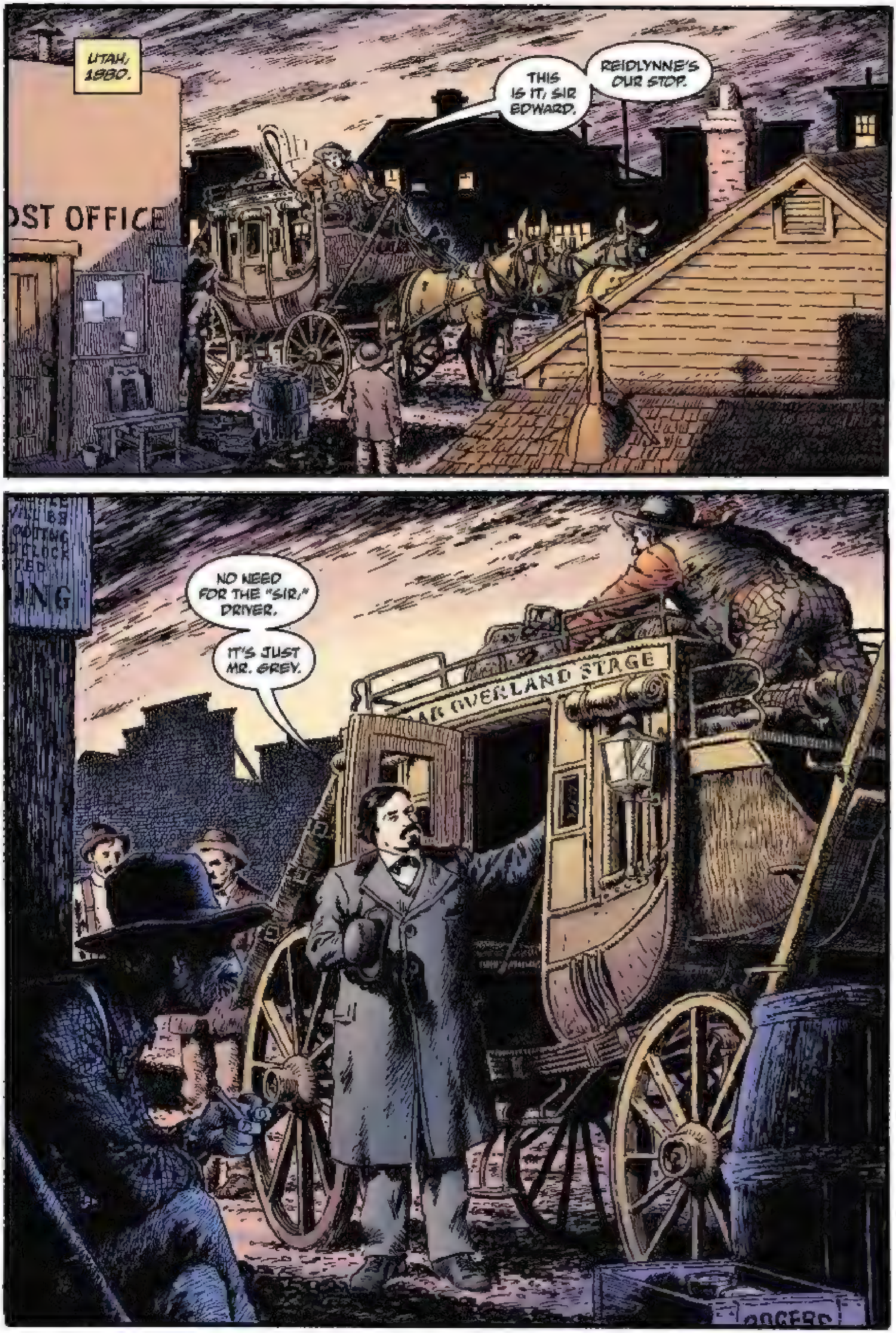

SOMETHING NOT QUITE HUMAN STANDS ON THE SHORE OF A SUNLESS SEA. IT ISN'T FROM THIS WORLD. IT ISN'T EVEN OF THIS TIME.
BEFORE ONE WEEK IS OUT, IT WILL CAUSE THE DEATHS OF THREE BILLION HUMAN BEINGS.
EARTH, HUH?
NICE PLACE. LOT OF POTENTIAL... HELL OF A LOT OF DEAD PEOPLE.
LET'S SEE IF THEY WANNA PLAY...

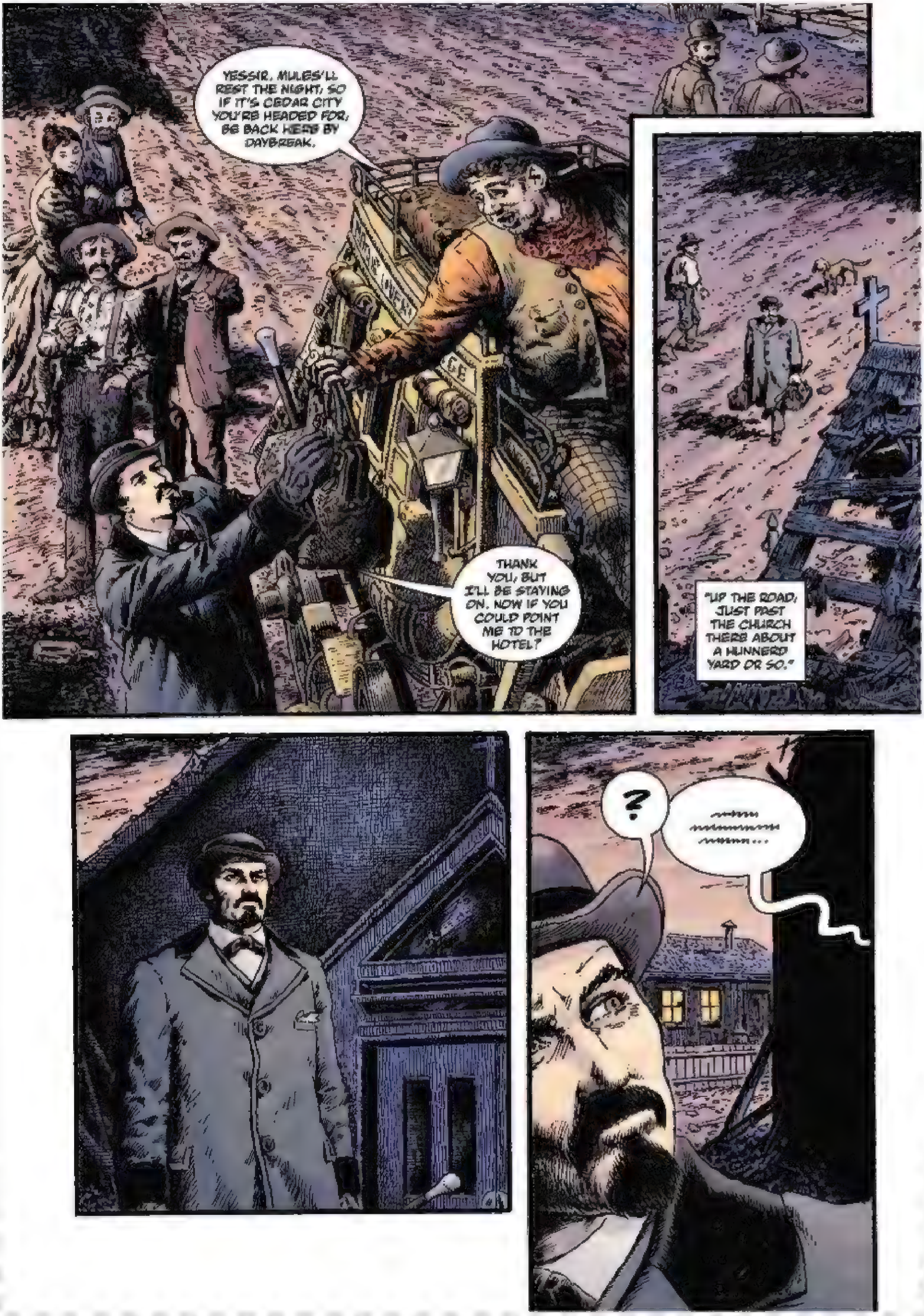

TWO DAYS LATER, THE OTHER SIDE OF THE PLANET — YANCEY STATION, REMOTE MINING OUTPOST IN THE CURSED EARTH —
LOOKS LIKE NOBODY'S HOME.
TWENTY MINERS JUST DON'T DISAPPEAR, PERRIER. WE'RE NOT LEAVING 'TIL WE FIND THEM.
OKAY...
WITH THE JUDGES, A UNIT OF YEAR TWELVE CADETS ON THEIR HOTDOG RUN — AN EVALUATION UNDER ACTUAL COMBAT CONDITIONS —
CADET GIANT! SPREAD 'EM OUT AN' SEARCH THE AREA!
YES, MA'AM!
LOG'S UP TO DATE. MUST'VE HAPPENED TODAY. WHATEVER IT WAS.
MMM. HELL OF A PLACE TO GET STUCK WITH A BUNCH OF CADETS AT SUNDOWN...
YEAH.

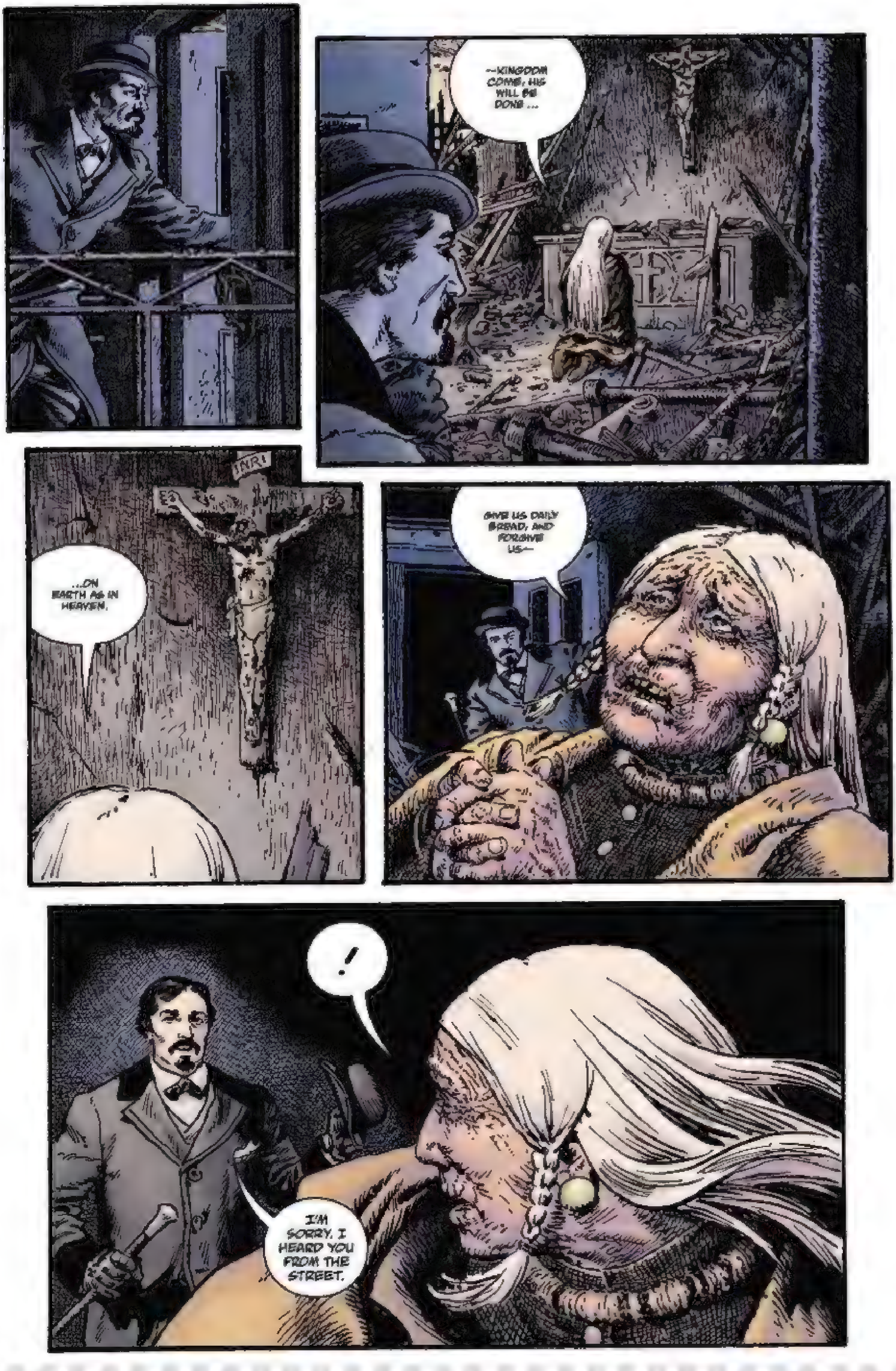

AND—
HEY, NOT BAD!
THIS LITTLE WORLD'S ABOUT READY TO SIT UP AND BEG.
OR...HEH... ROLL OVER AND PLAY DEAD.
ROCK AN' ROLL!
SOME OF THE CADETS HAVE SEEN ACTION BEFORE, DURING THE BIG NEC. YOUNG GIANT IS SHAPING UP WELL—
WE'LL TAKE THE MINESHAFT— YOU TWO DO THE STORAGE SHEDS.
SHAFT 3
COMES WITH THE BLOODLINE.

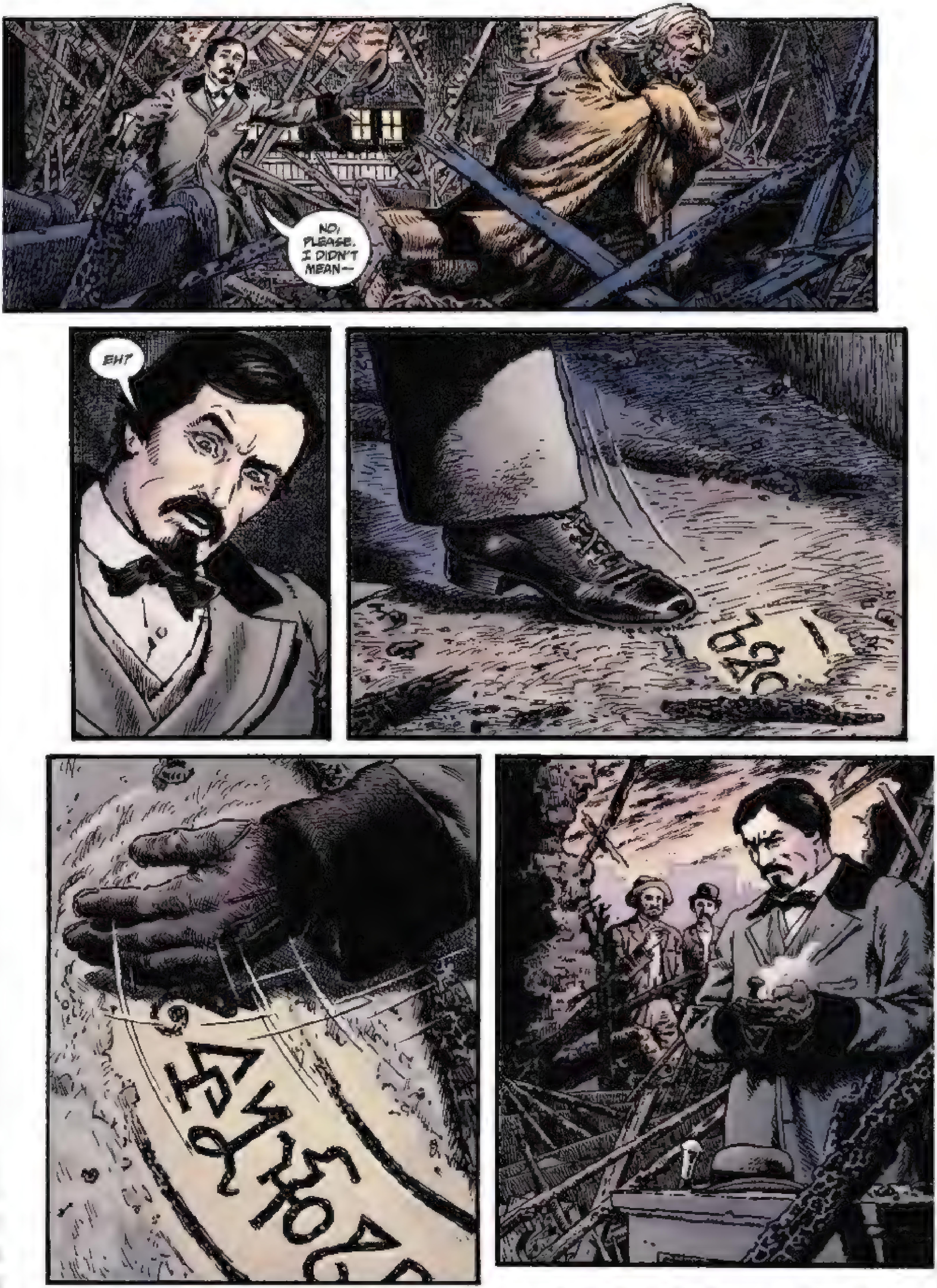

MY SIDE'S CLEAR, KROWE.
HANG ON—
WILSON! LOOK—
AAAAAAAIIIIIIEEEEEEEE
THAT'S KROWE. WHERE...
KROWE'S FREAKING! WHAT'S—
CONVERGE ON KROWE! NOW!
WILSON!
EKERSON AND SANTANDO, WATCH THE DOOR! WILSON! WHERE'S KROWE?
DROKK!

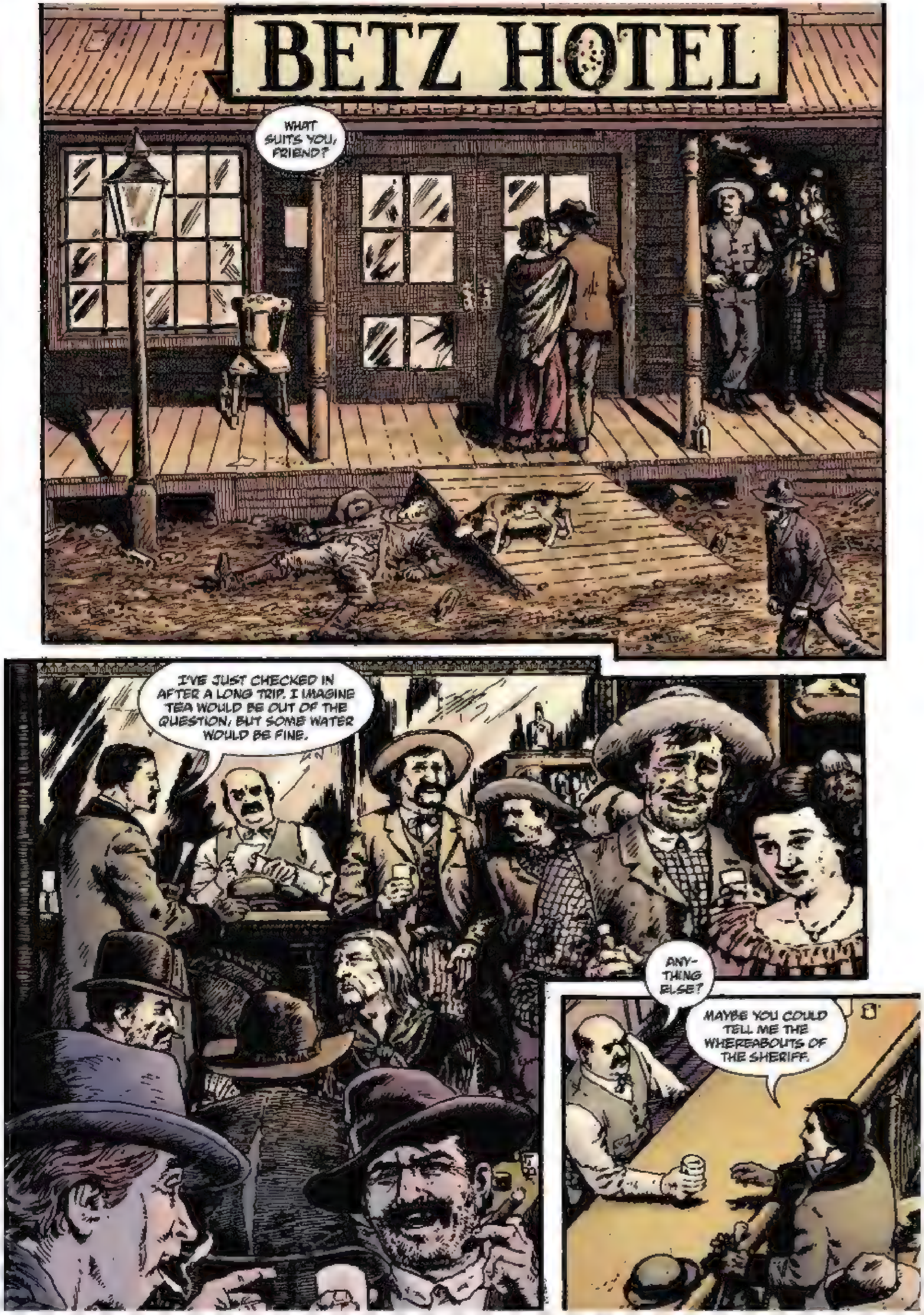

KROWE...!
A...A WALKING CORPSE! HOW DO YOU STOP—
BULLET SEEMS TO WORK.
L-L-LOOK!
YOU CADETS BETTER BE READY—
YOU'RE STARTING IN AT THE DEEP END

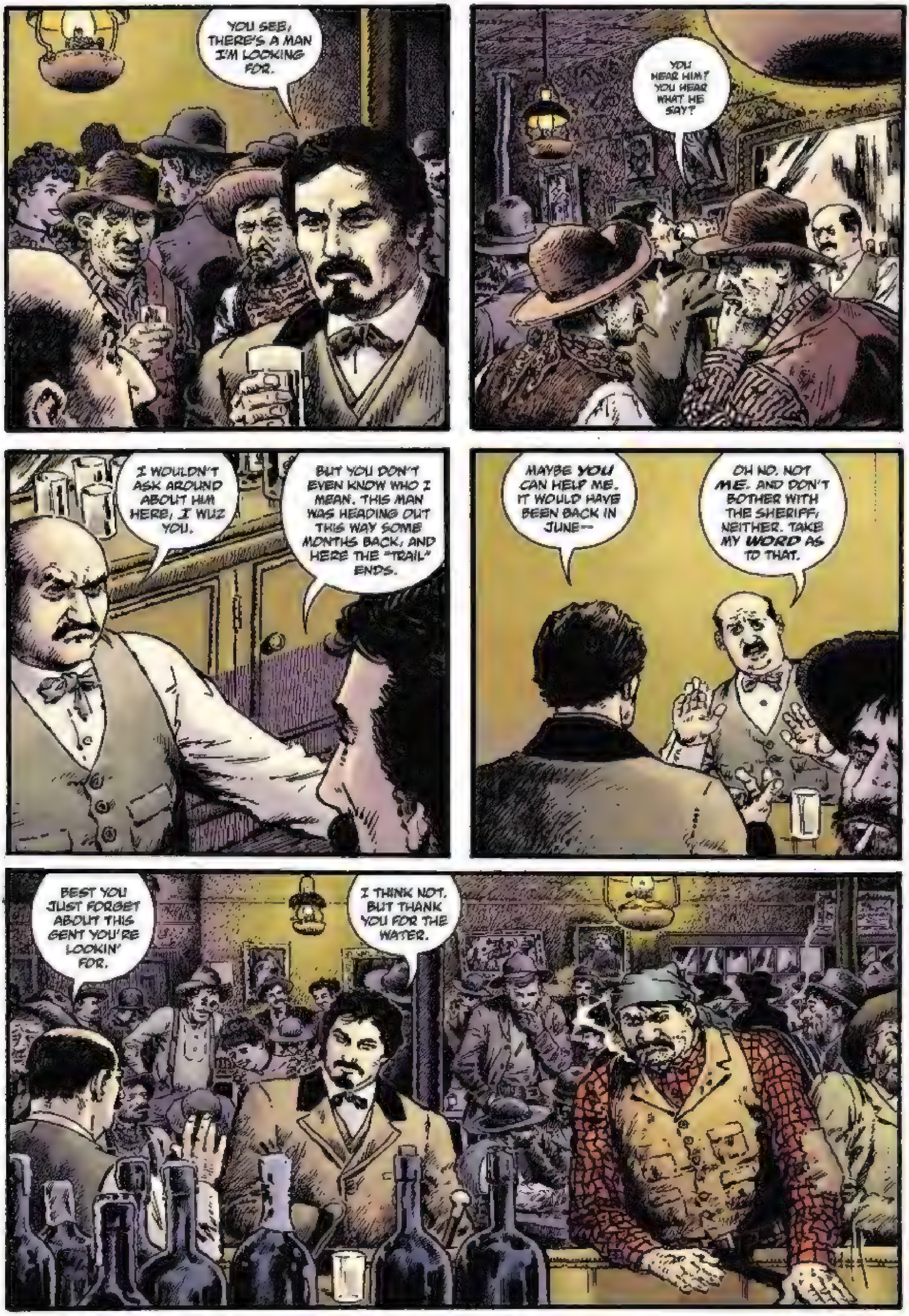

UTAH, 1880.
THIS IS IT, SIR EDWARD.
REIDLYNNE'S OUR STOP.
OST OFFICE
NO NEED FOR THE "SIR," DRIVER.
IT'S JUST MR. GREY.
OVERLAND STAGE


YESSIR. MULES'LL REST THE NIGHT, SO IF IT'S CEDAR CITY YOU'RE HEADED FOR, BE BACK HERE BY DAYBREAK.
THANK YOU, BUT I'LL BE STAYING ON. NOW IF YOU COULD POINT ME TO THE HOTEL?
"UP THE ROAD, JUST PAST THE CHURCH THERE ABOUT A HUNNERD YARD OR SO."
?


--KINGDOM COME; HIS WILL BE DONE ...
...ON EARTH AS IN HEAVEN.
INRI
GIVE US DAILY BREAD, AND FORGIVE US--
!
I'M SORRY. I HEARD YOU FROM THE STREET.


NO, PLEASE. I DIDN'T MEAN—
EH?


BETZ HOTEL
WHAT SUITS YOU, FRIEND?
I'VE JUST CHECKED IN AFTER A LONG TRIP. I IMAGINE TEA WOULD BE OUT OF THE QUESTION, BUT SOME WATER WOULD BE FINE.
ANY-THING ELSE?
MAYBE YOU COULD TELL ME THE WHEREABOUTS OF THE SHERIFF.


YOU SEE, THERE'S A MAN I'M LOOKING FOR.
YOU HEAR HIM? YOU HEAR WHAT HE SAY?
I WOULDN'T ASK AROUND ABOUT HIM HERE, I WUZ YOU.
BUT YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW WHO I MEAN. THIS MAN WAS HEADING OUT THIS WAY SOME MONTHS BACK, AND HERE THE "TRAIL" ENDS.
MAYBE YOU CAN HELP ME. IT WOULD HAVE BEEN BACK IN JUNE--
OH NO, NOT ME. AND DON'T BOTHER WITH THE SHERIFF, NEITHER. TAKE MY WORD AS TO THAT.
BEST YOU JUST FORGET ABOUT THIS GENT YOU'RE LOOKIN' FOR.
I THINK NOT. BUT THANK YOU FOR THE WATER.

XIII

W. VANCE

J. VAN HAMME

THE DAY OF THE BLACK SUN

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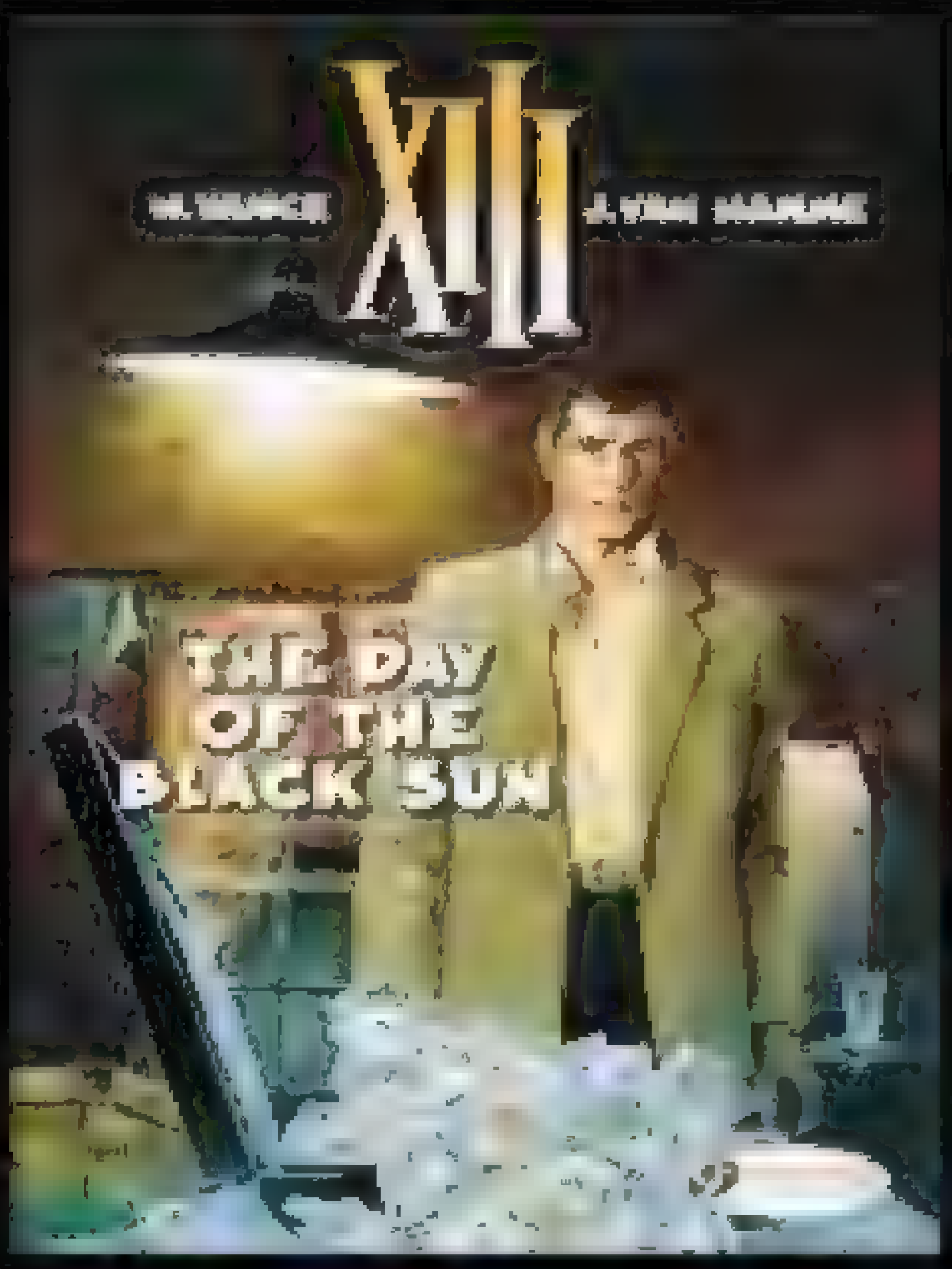
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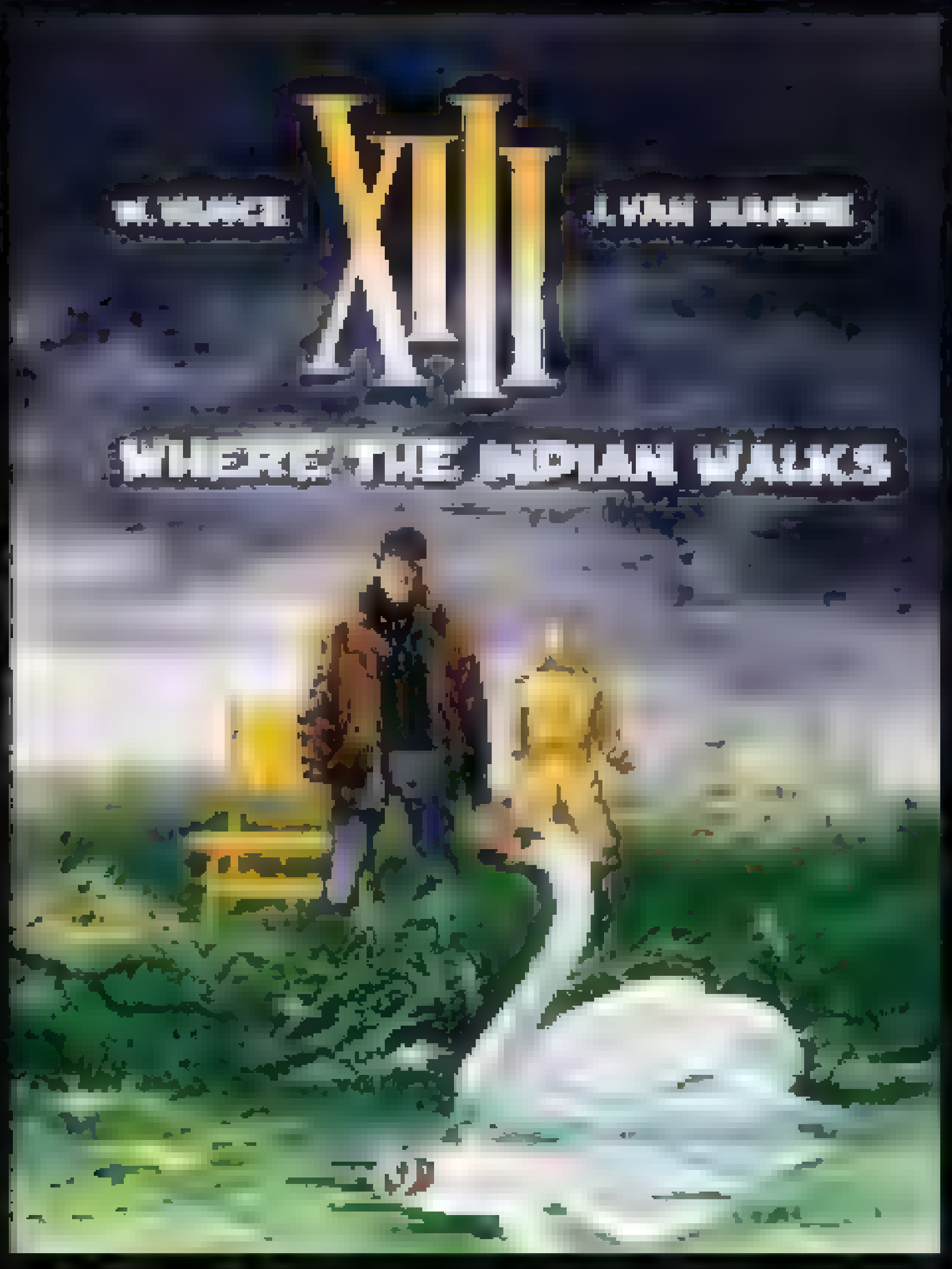
THE DAY OF THE BLACK SUN

XIII. A man's quest for his past and his identity.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WHERE THE INDIAN WALKS

W. VANCE
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ALL THE TEARS OF HELL

W. VANCE
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SPADS

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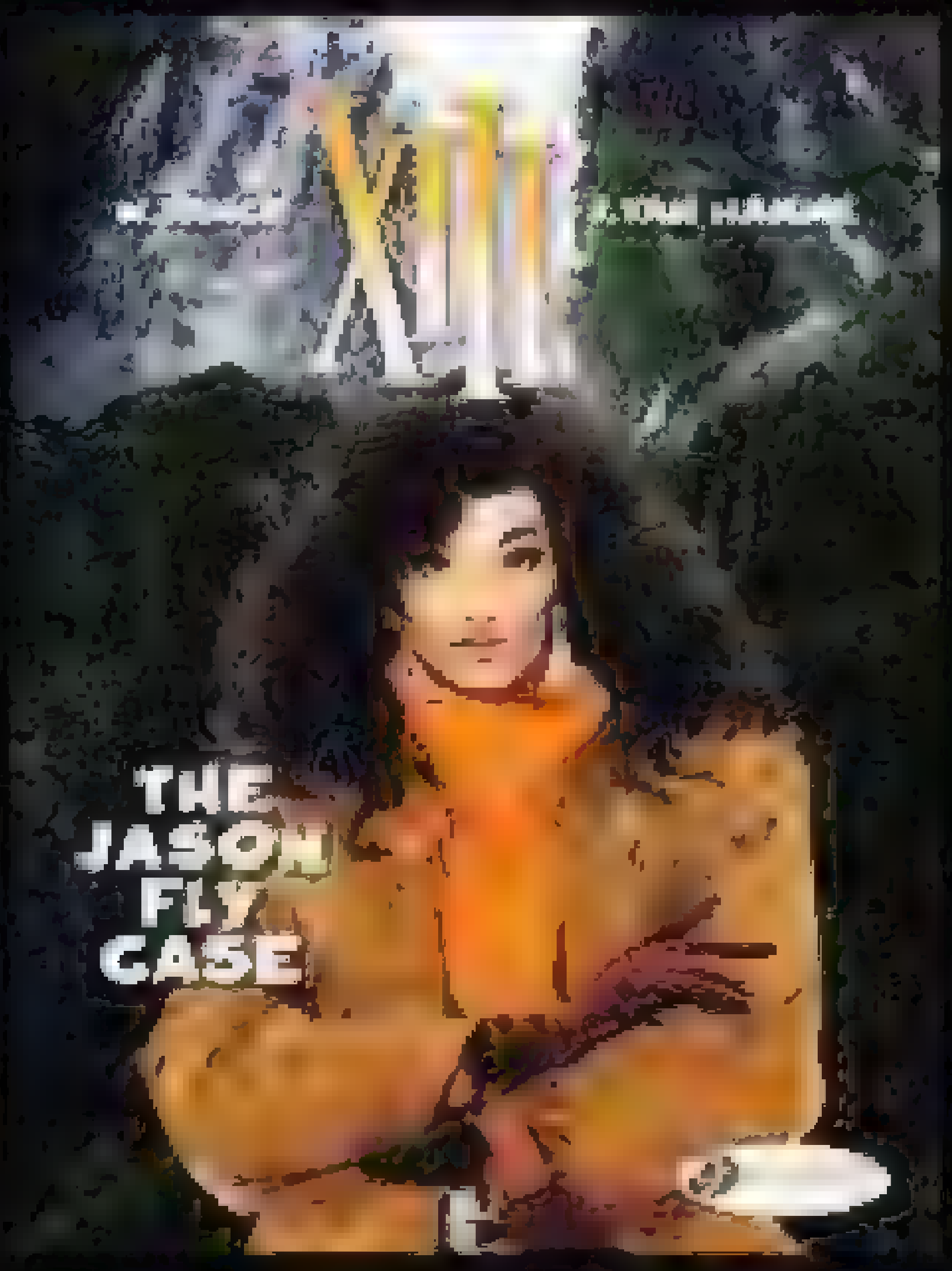
FULL RED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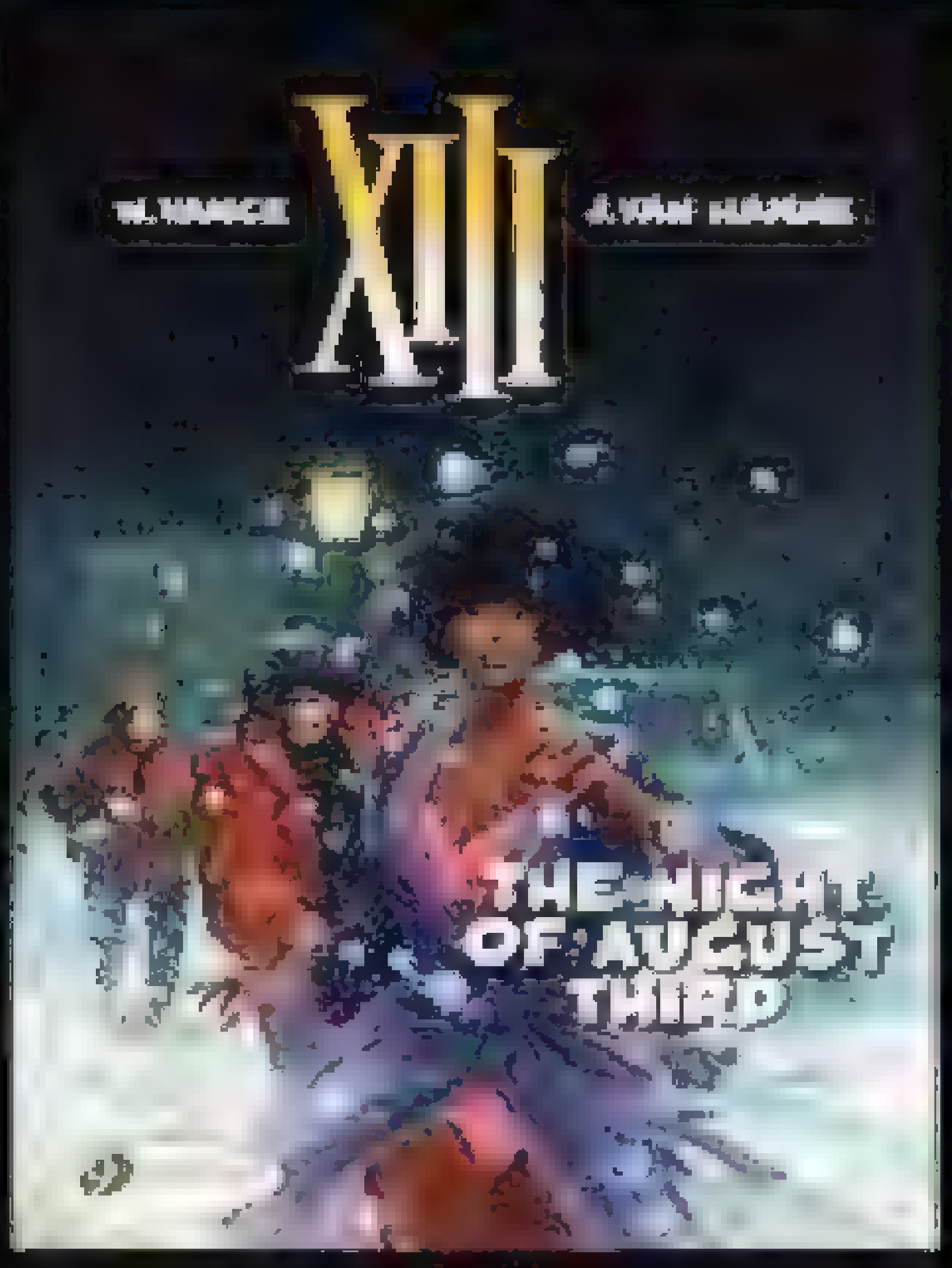
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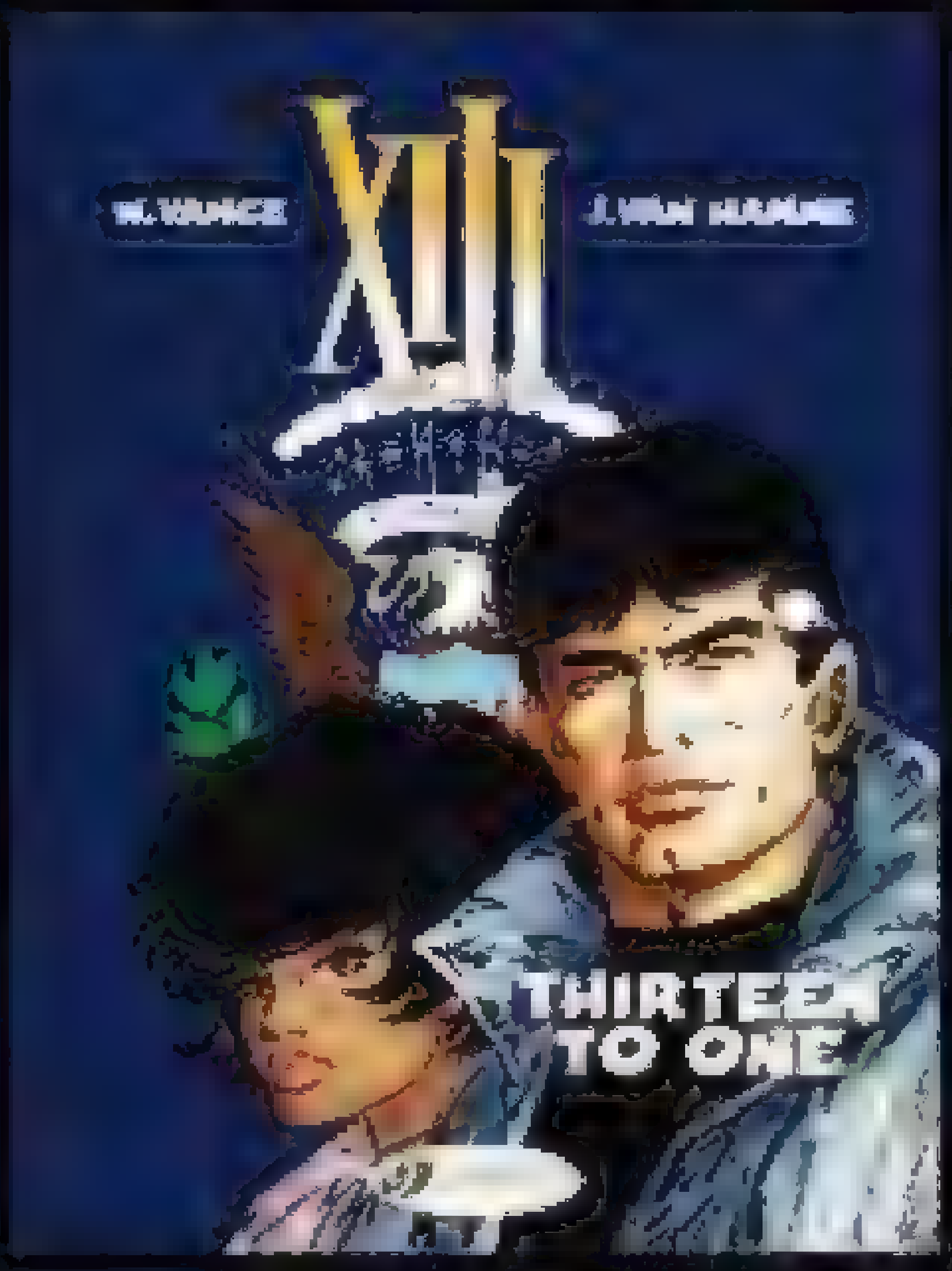
THE NIGHT OF AUGUST THIRD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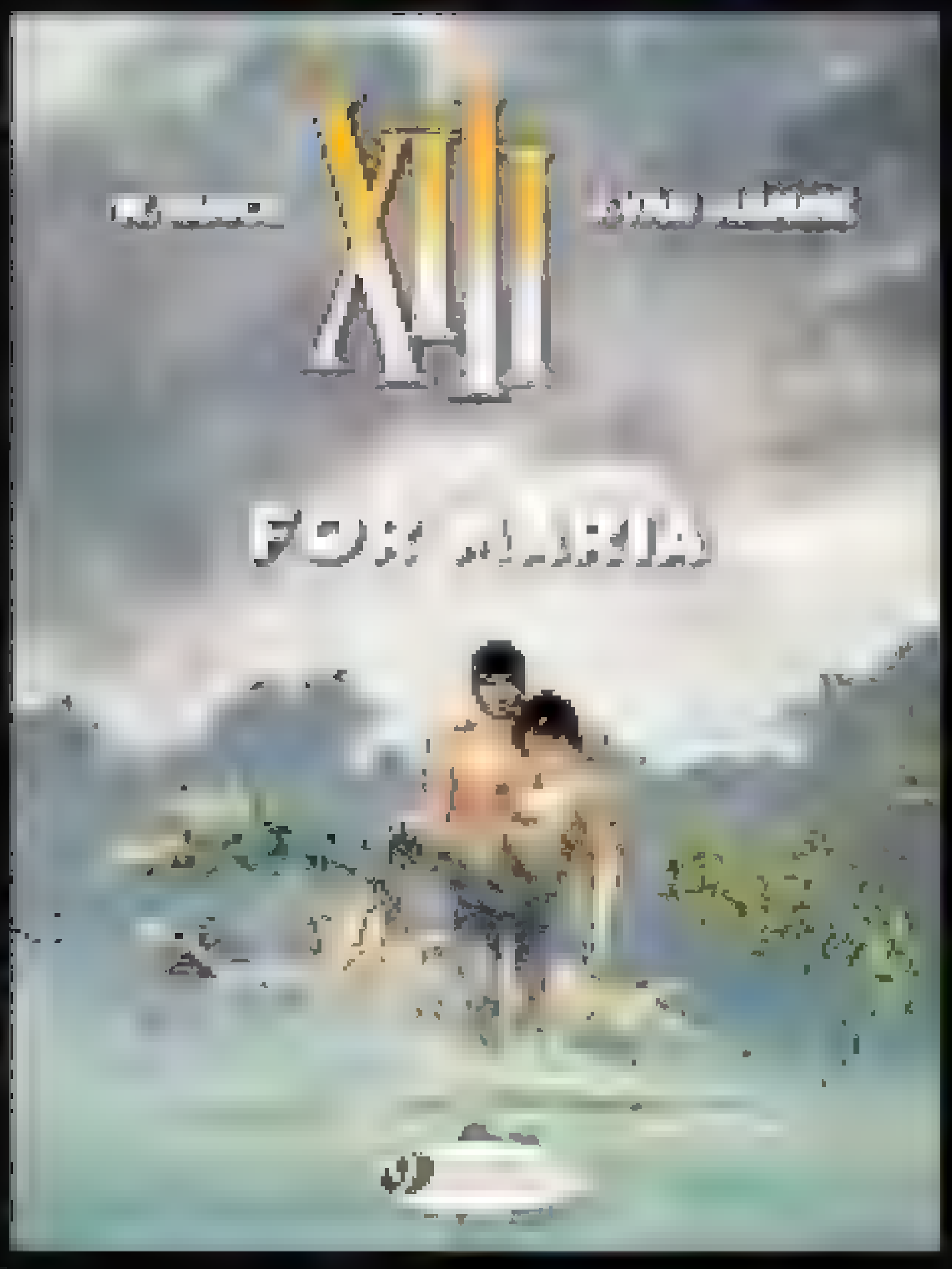
XIII
J. VAN HAMME
THIRTEEN TO ONE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J. VAN HAMME
FOR MARIA

XIII
EL CASCADOR

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THE DAY OF THE BLACK SUN

XIII

Colour work: PETRA

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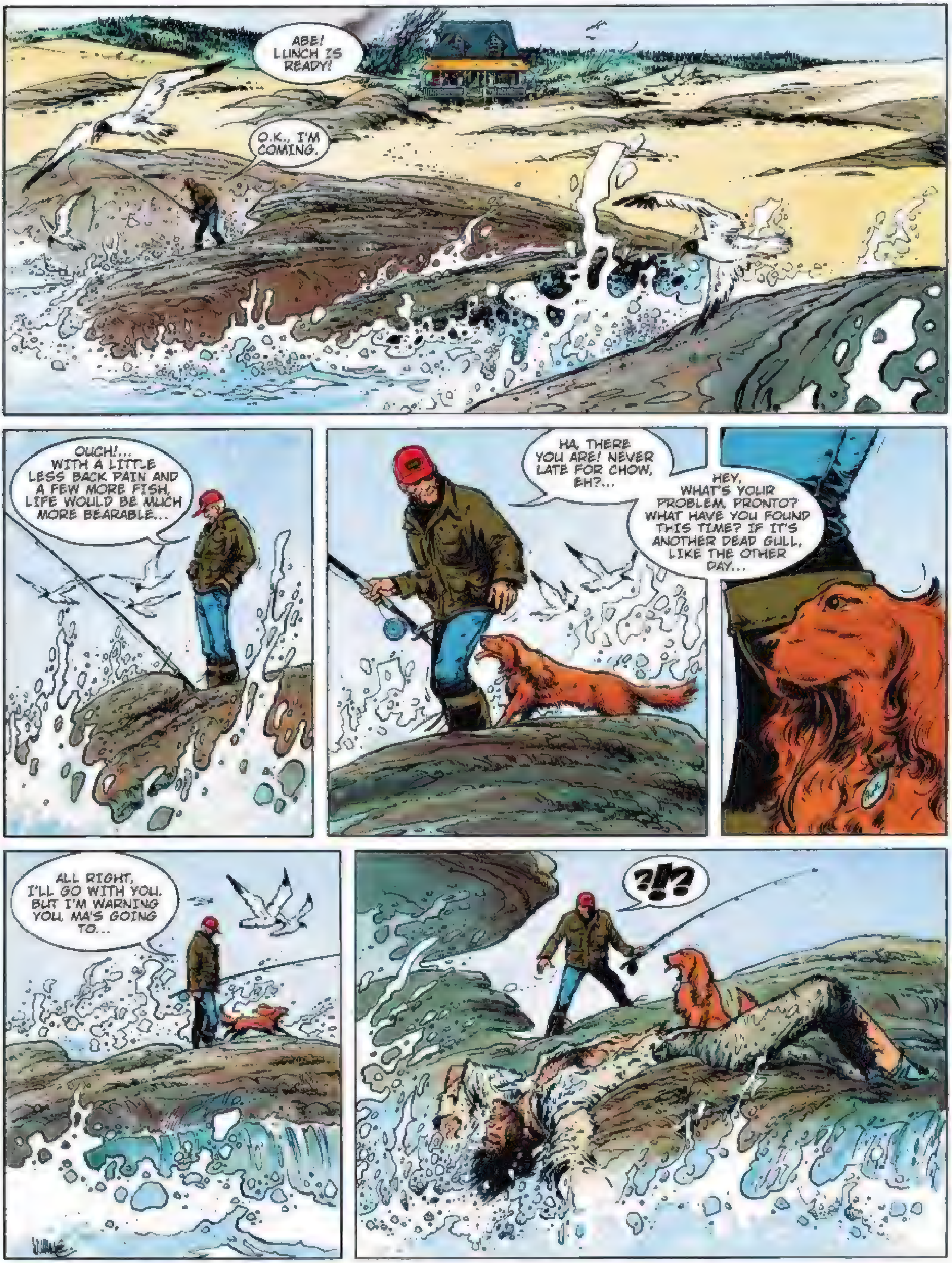
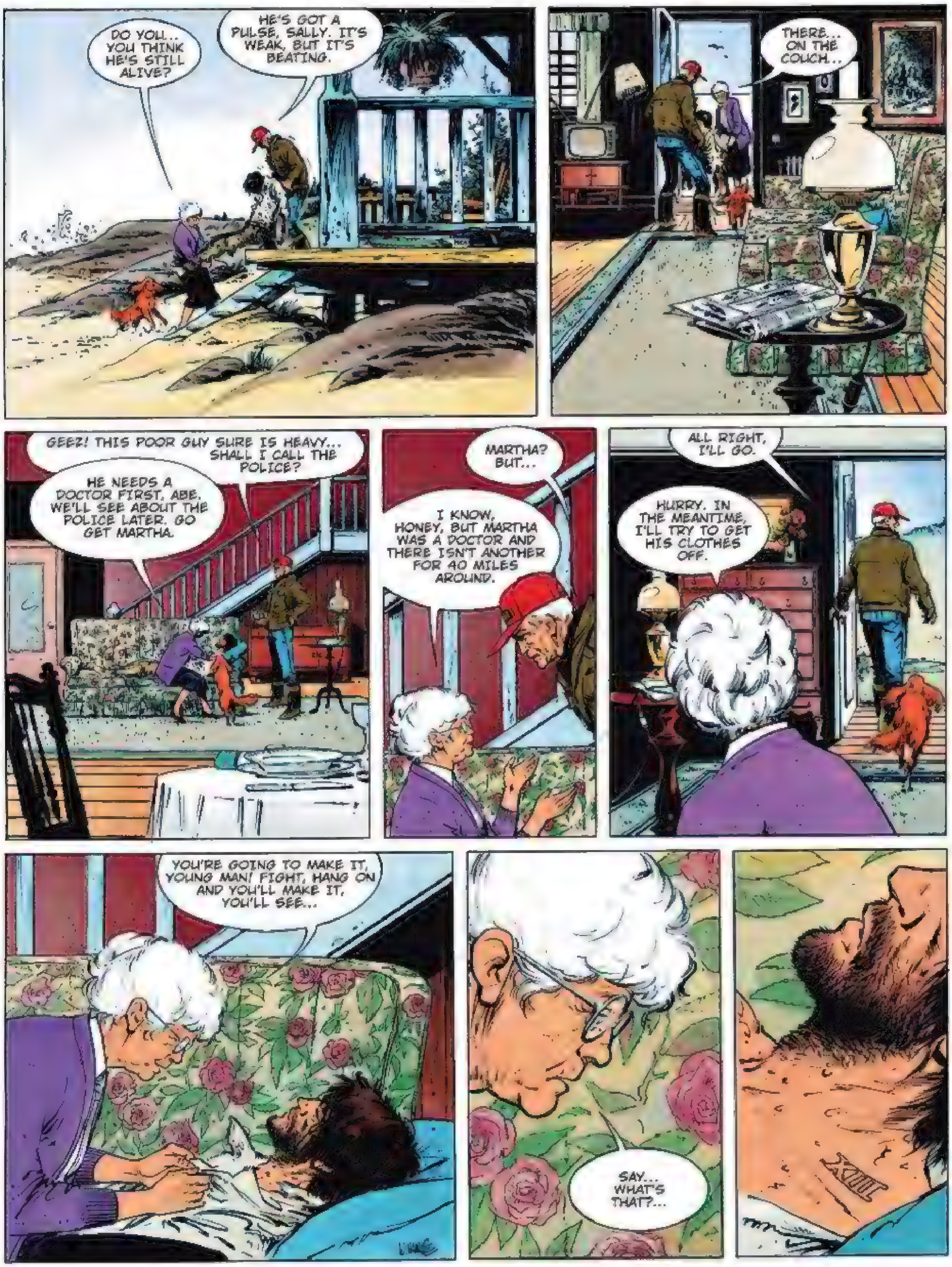
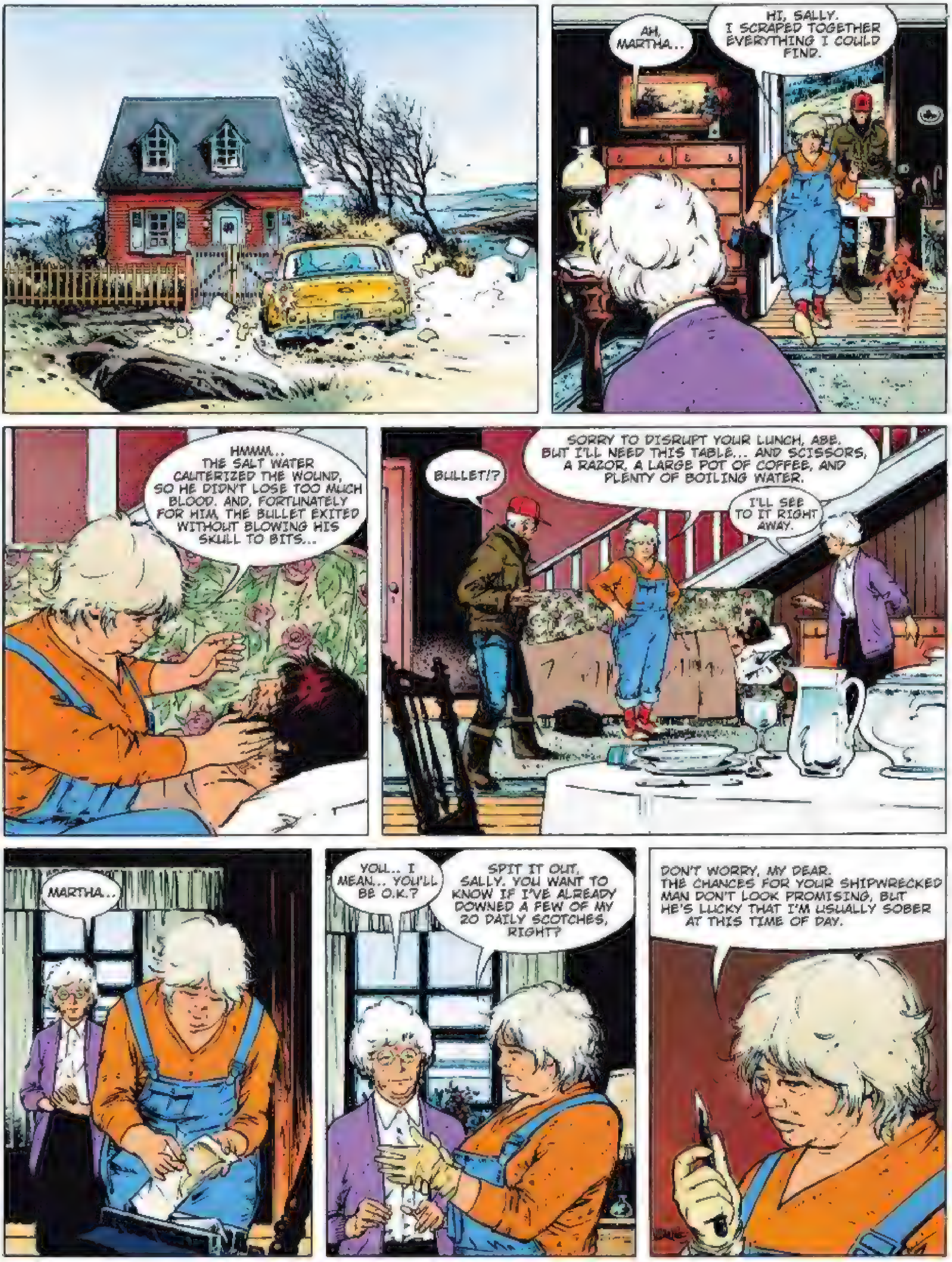
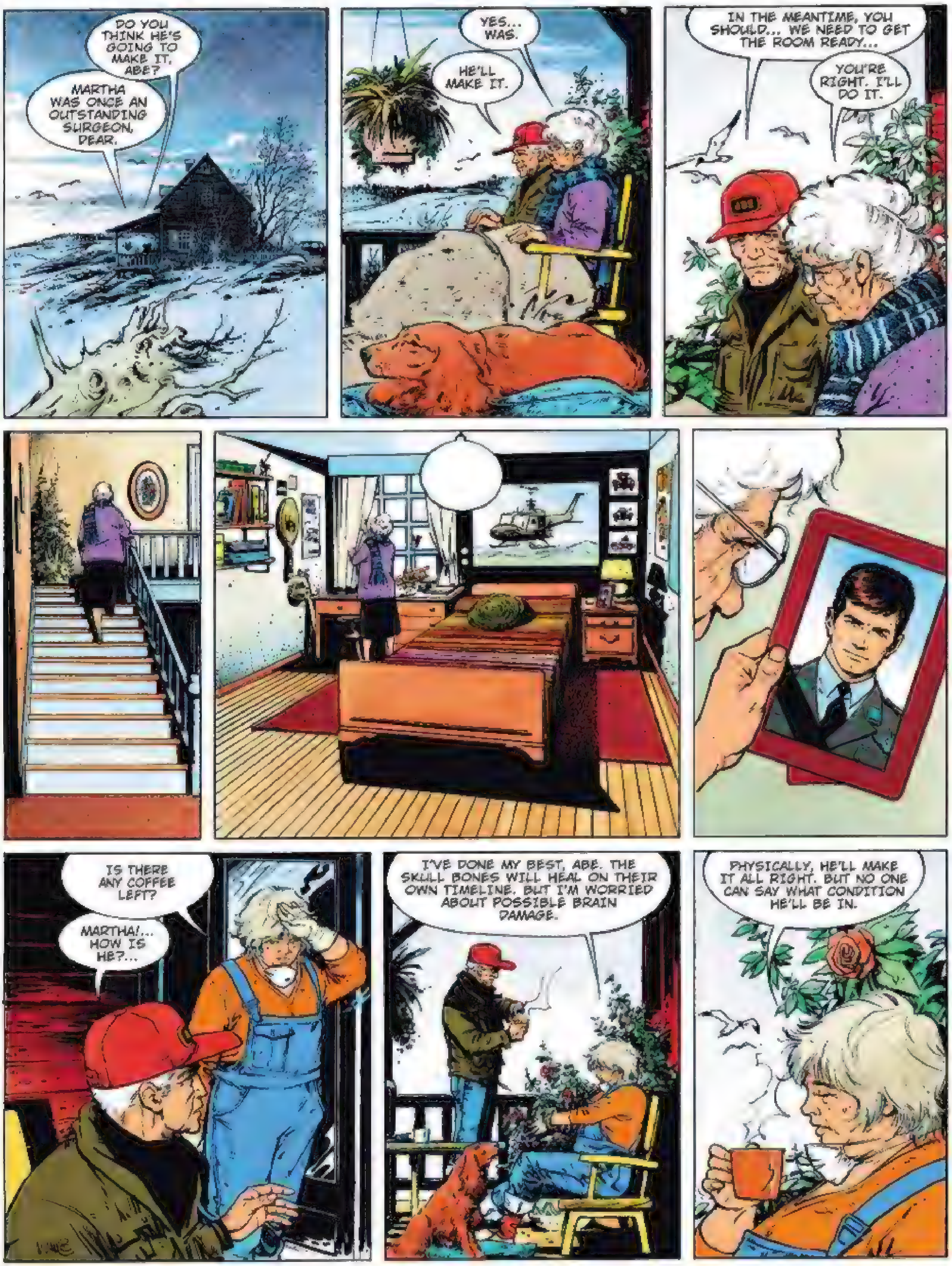
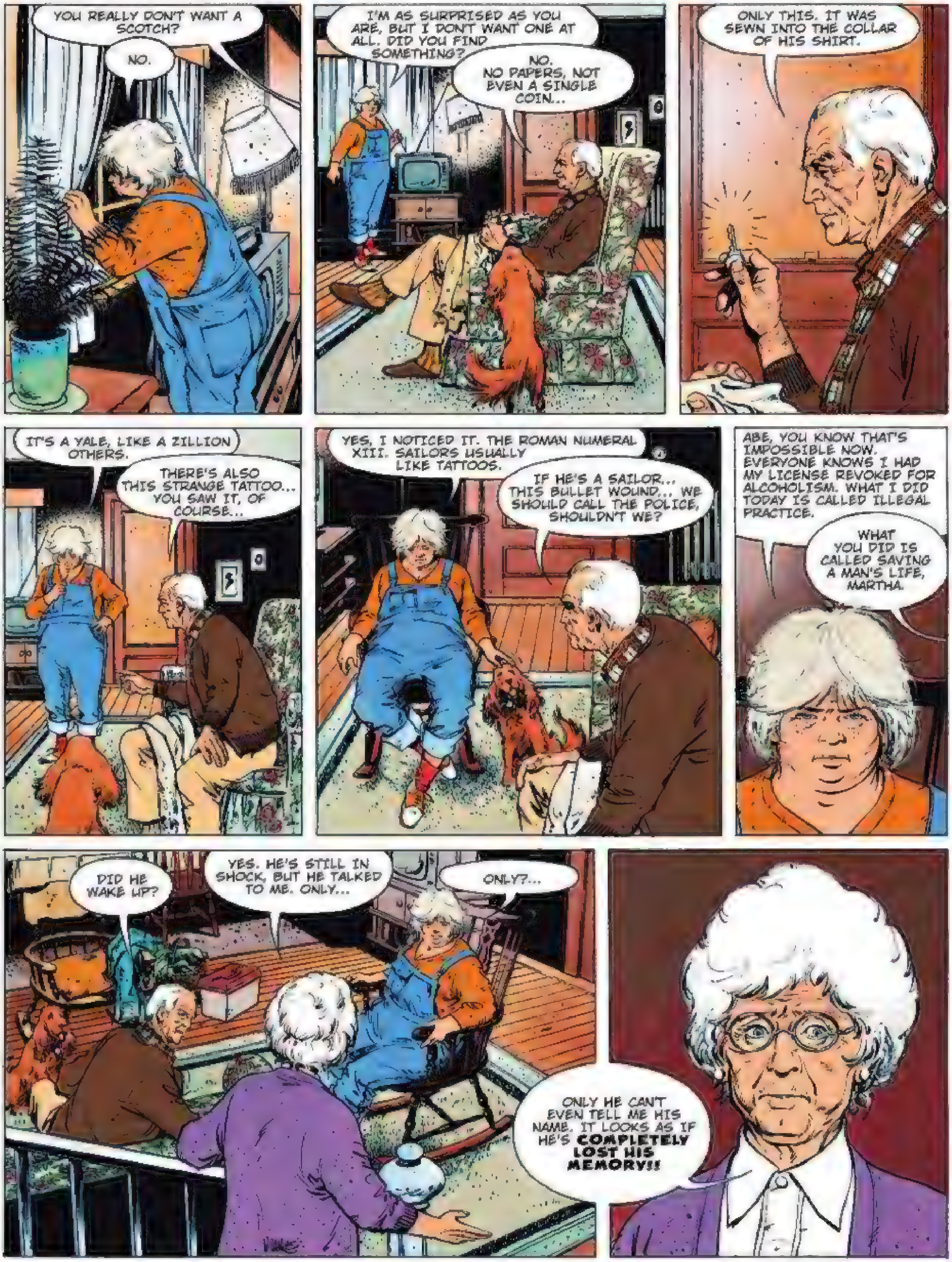
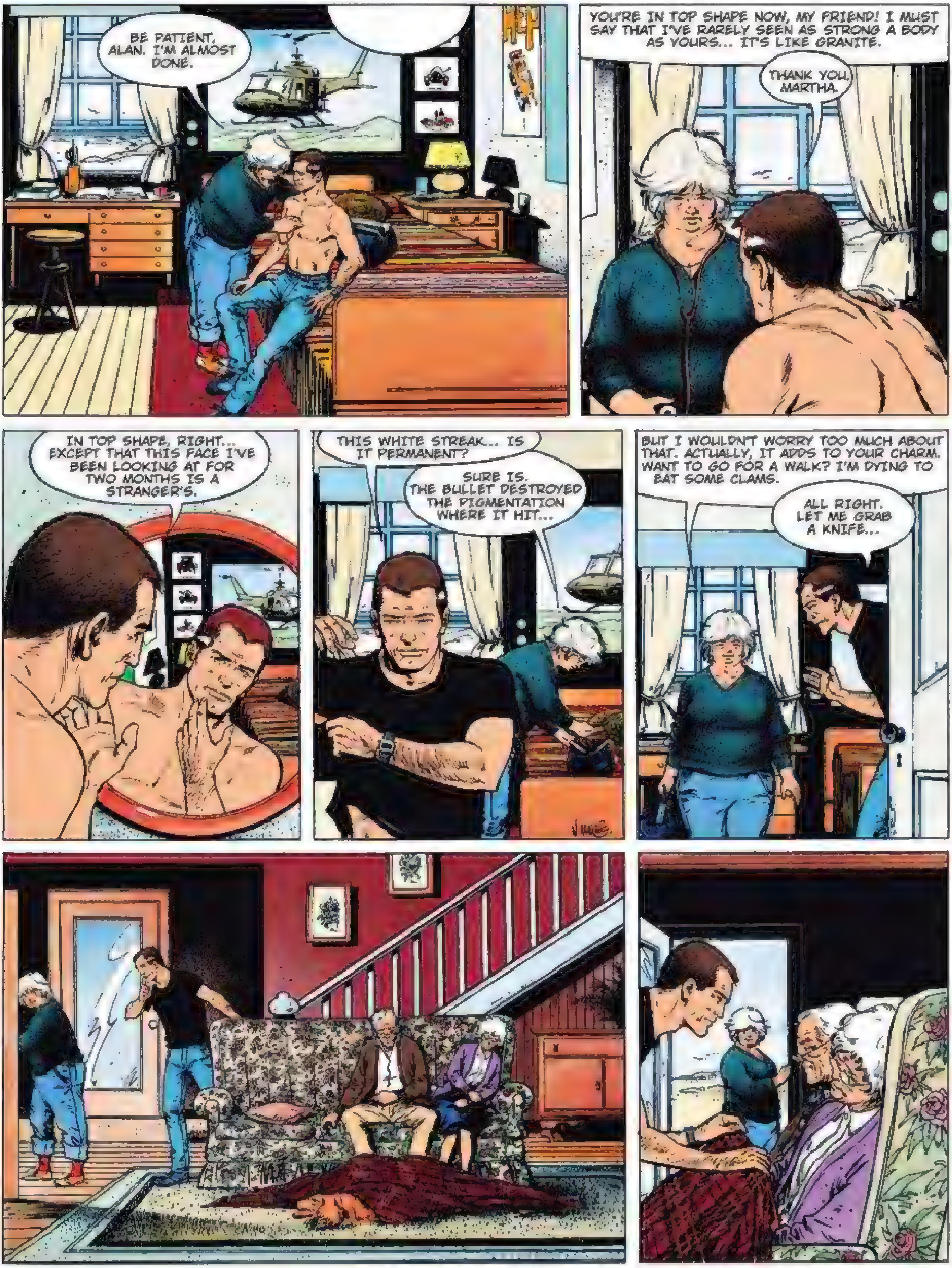

ABE! LUNCH IS READY!
O.K., I'M COMING.
OUCH!... WITH A LITTLE LESS BACK PAIN AND A FEW MORE FISH, LIFE WOULD BE MUCH MORE BEARABLE...
HA, THERE YOU ARE! NEVER LATE FOR CHOW, EH?...
HEY, WHAT'S YOUR PROBLEM, PRONTO? WHAT HAVE YOU FOUND THIS TIME? IF IT'S ANOTHER DEAD GULL, LIKE THE OTHER DAY...
ALL RIGHT, I'LL GO WITH YOU. BUT I'M WARNING YOU, MA'S GOING TO...
?!?

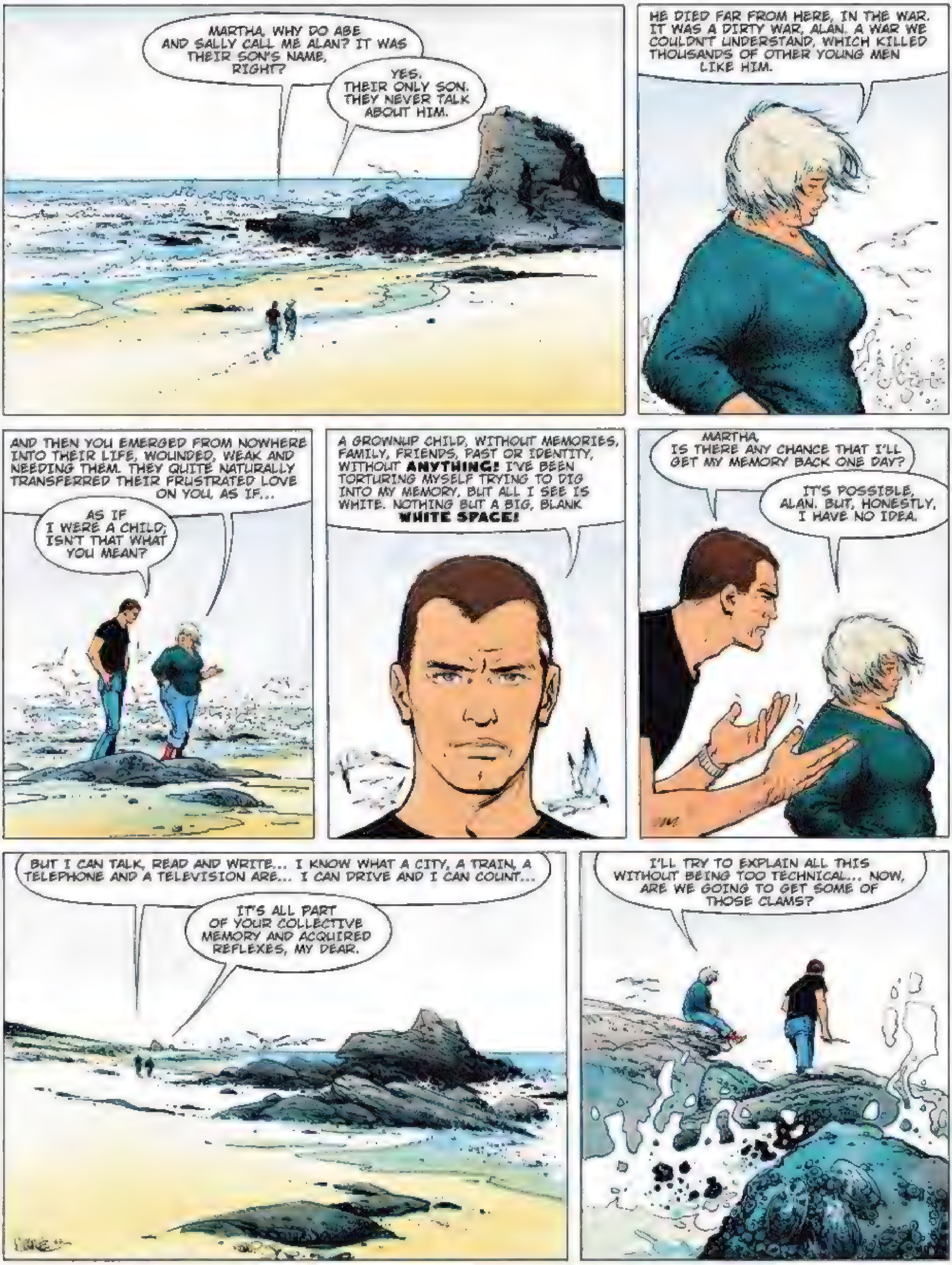

DO YOU... YOU THINK HE'S STILL ALIVE?
HE'S GOT A PULSE, SALLY. IT'S WEAK, BUT IT'S BEATING.
THERE... ON THE COUCH...
GEEZ! THIS POOR GUY SURE IS HEAVY... SHALL I CALL THE POLICE?
HE NEEDS A DOCTOR FIRST, ABE. WE'LL SEE ABOUT THE POLICE LATER. GO GET MARTHA.
MARTHA? BUT...
I KNOW, HONEY, BUT MARTHA WAS A DOCTOR AND THERE ISN'T ANOTHER FOR 40 MILES AROUND.
ALL RIGHT, I'LL GO.
HURRY. IN THE MEANTIME, I'LL TRY TO GET HIS CLOTHES OFF.
YOU'RE GOING TO MAKE IT, YOUNG MAN! FIGHT, HANG ON AND YOU'LL MAKE IT, YOU'LL SEE...
SAY... WHAT'S THAT?...
XIII

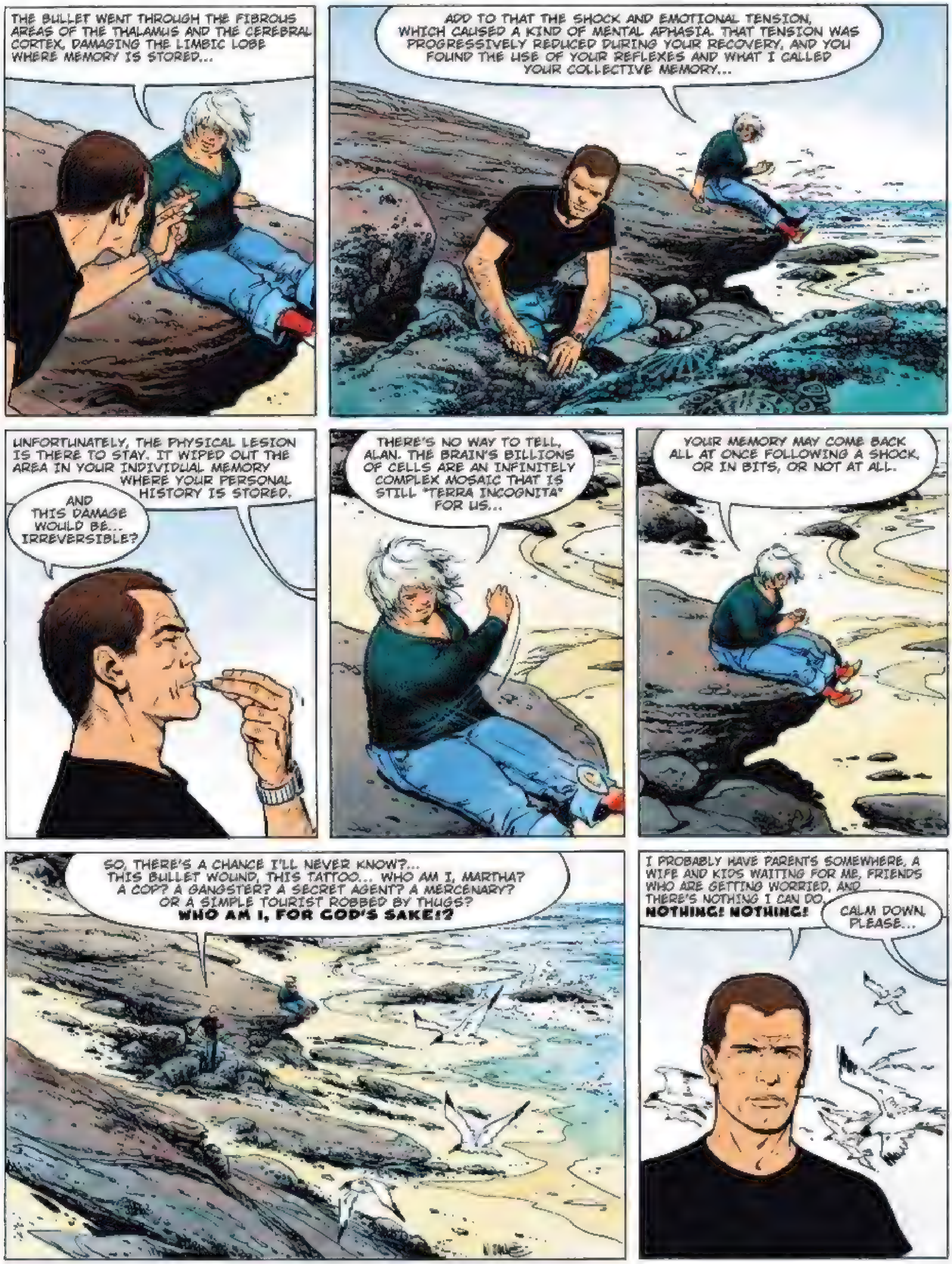

AH, MARTHA...
HI, SALLY. I SCRAPED TOGETHER EVERYTHING I COULD FIND.
HMMM... THE SALT WATER CAUTERIZED THE WOUND, SO HE DIDN'T LOSE TOO MUCH BLOOD. AND, FORTUNATELY FOR HIM, THE BULLET EXITED WITHOUT BLOWING HIS SKULL TO BITS...
BULLET!?
SORRY TO DISRUPT YOUR LUNCH, ABE. BUT I'LL NEED THIS TABLE... AND SCISSORS, A RAZOR, A LARGE POT OF COFFEE, AND PLENTY OF BOILING WATER.
I'LL SEE TO IT RIGHT AWAY.
MARTHA...
YOU... I MEAN... YOU'LL BE O.K.?
SPIT IT OUT, SALLY. YOU WANT TO KNOW IF I'VE ALREADY DOWNED A FEW OF MY 20 DAILY SCOTCHES, RIGHT?
DON'T WORRY, MY DEAR. THE CHANCES FOR YOUR SHIPWRECKED MAN DON'T LOOK PROMISING, BUT HE'S LUCKY THAT I'M USUALLY SOBER AT THIS TIME OF DAY.

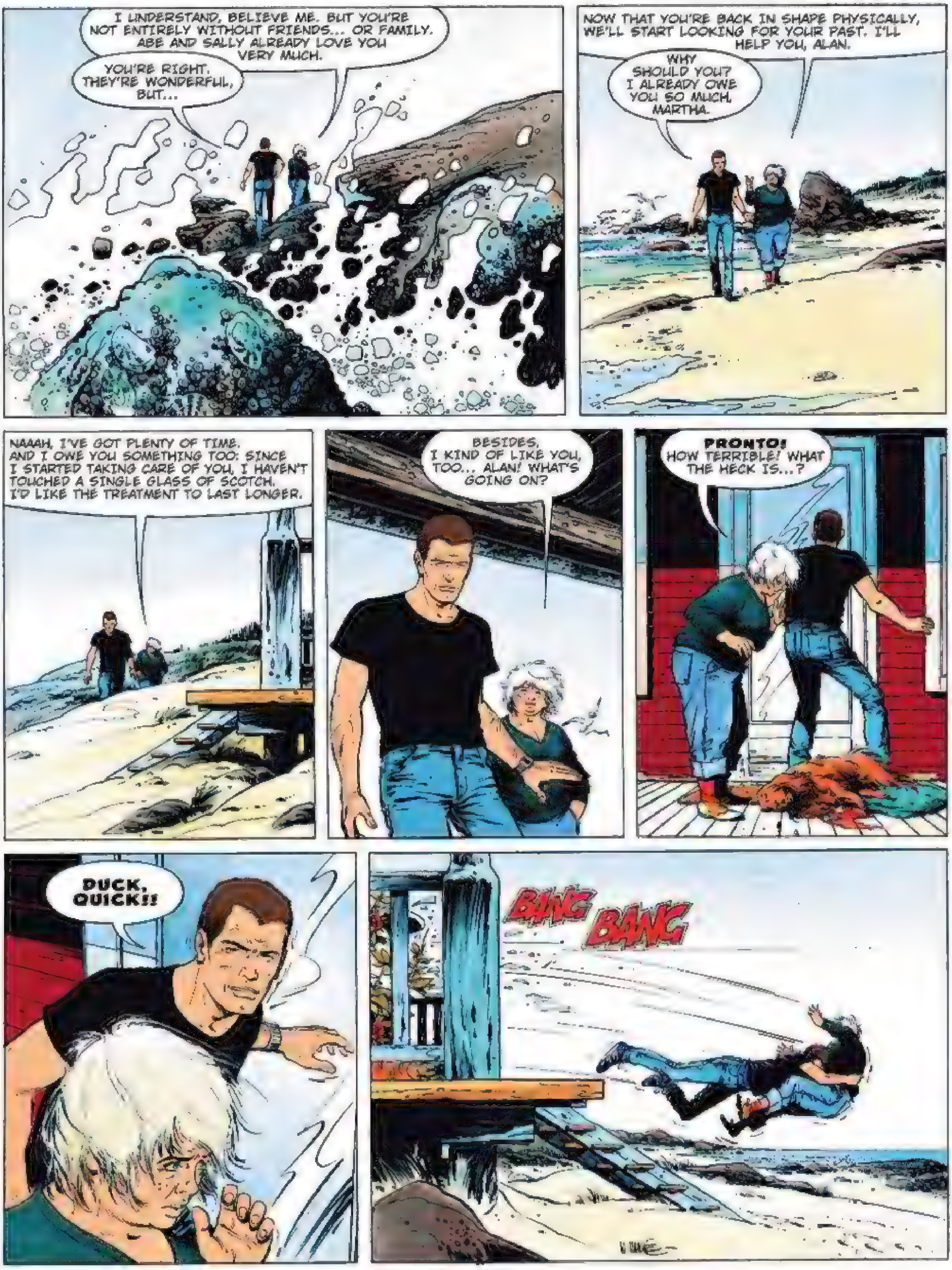

DO YOU THINK HE'S GOING TO MAKE IT, ABE?
MARTHA WAS ONCE AN OUTSTANDING SURGEON, DEAR.
YES... WAS.
HE'LL MAKE IT.
IN THE MEANTIME, YOU SHOULD... WE NEED TO GET THE ROOM READY...
YOU'RE RIGHT. I'LL DO IT.
IS THERE ANY COFFEE LEFT?
MARTHA!... HOW IS HE?...
I'VE DONE MY BEST, ABE. THE SKULL BONES WILL HEAL ON THEIR OWN TIMELINE. BUT I'M WORRIED ABOUT POSSIBLE BRAIN DAMAGE.
PHYSICALLY, HE'LL MAKE IT ALL RIGHT. BUT NO ONE CAN SAY WHAT CONDITION HE'LL BE IN.

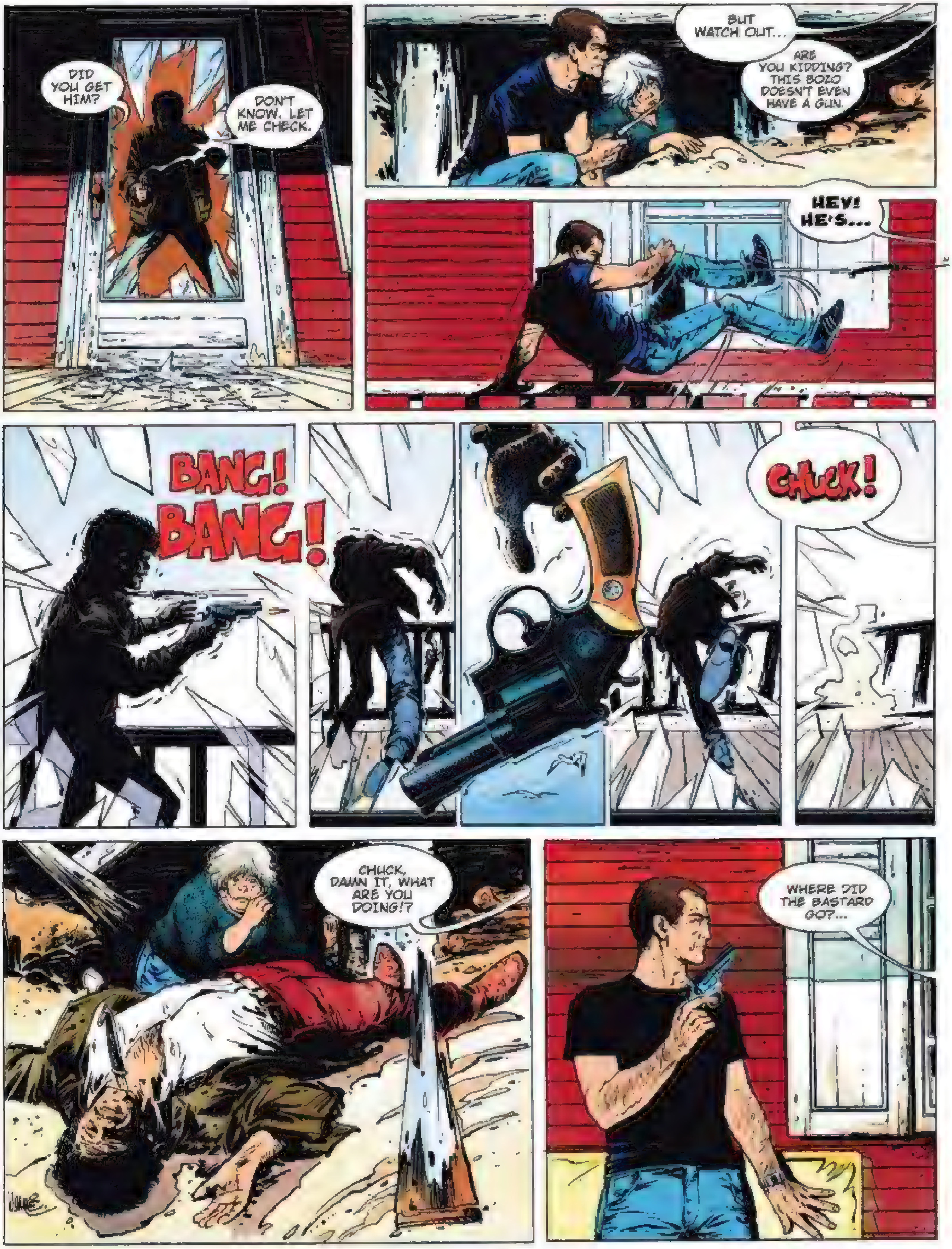

YOU REALLY DON'T WANT A SCOTCH?
NO.
I'M AS SURPRISED AS YOU ARE, BUT I DON'T WANT ONE AT ALL. DID YOU FIND SOMETHING?
NO. NO PAPERS, NOT EVEN A SINGLE COIN...
ONLY THIS. IT WAS SEWN INTO THE COLLAR OF HIS SHIRT.
IT'S A YALE, LIKE A ZILLION OTHERS.
THERE'S ALSO THIS STRANGE TATTOO... YOU SAW IT, OF COURSE...
YES, I NOTICED IT. THE ROMAN NUMERAL XIII. SAILORS USUALLY LIKE TATTOOS.
IF HE'S A SAILOR... THIS BULLET WOUND... WE SHOULD CALL THE POLICE, SHOULDN'T WE?
ABE, YOU KNOW THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE NOW. EVERYONE KNOWS I HAD MY LICENSE REVOKED FOR ALCOHOLISM. WHAT I DID TODAY IS CALLED ILLEGAL PRACTICE.
WHAT YOU DID IS CALLED SAVING A MAN'S LIFE, MARTHA.
DID HE WAKE UP?
YES. HE'S STILL IN SHOCK, BUT HE TALKED TO ME. ONLY...
ONLY?...
ONLY HE CAN'T EVEN TELL ME HIS NAME. IT LOOKS AS IF HE'S COMPLETELY LOST HIS MEMORY!!

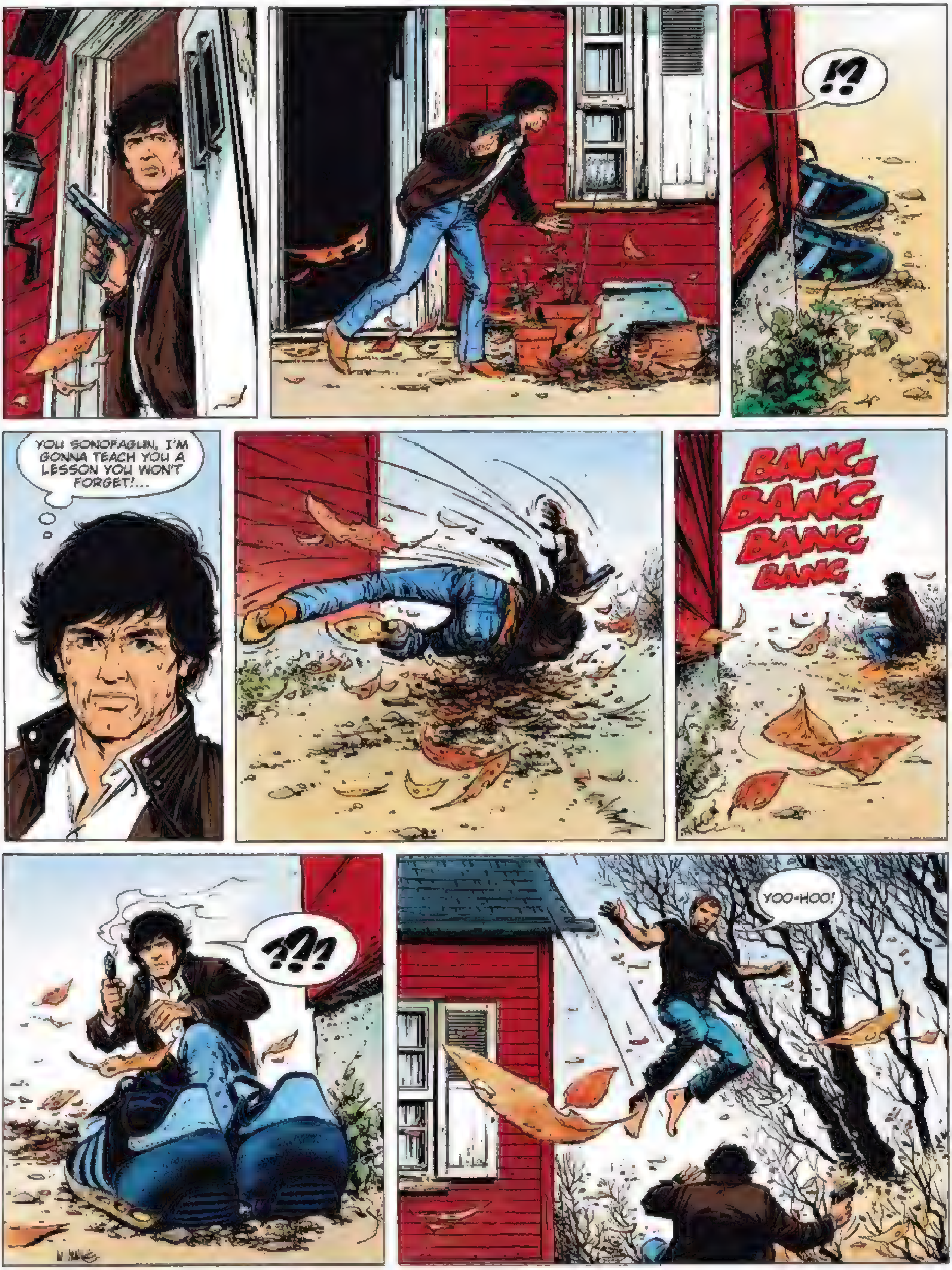

BE PATIENT, ALAN. I'M ALMOST DONE.
YOU'RE IN TOP SHAPE NOW, MY FRIEND! I MUST SAY THAT I'VE RARELY SEEN AS STRONG A BODY AS YOURS... IT'S LIKE GRANITE.
THANK YOU, MARTHA.
IN TOP SHAPE, RIGHT... EXCEPT THAT THIS FACE I'VE BEEN LOOKING AT FOR TWO MONTHS IS A STRANGER'S.
THIS WHITE STREAK... IS IT PERMANENT?
SURE IS. THE BULLET DESTROYED THE PIGMENTATION WHERE IT HIT...
BUT I WOULDN'T WORRY TOO MUCH ABOUT THAT. ACTUALLY, IT ADDS TO YOUR CHARM. WANT TO GO FOR A WALK? I'M DYING TO EAT SOME CLAMS.
ALL RIGHT. LET ME GRAB A KNIFE...

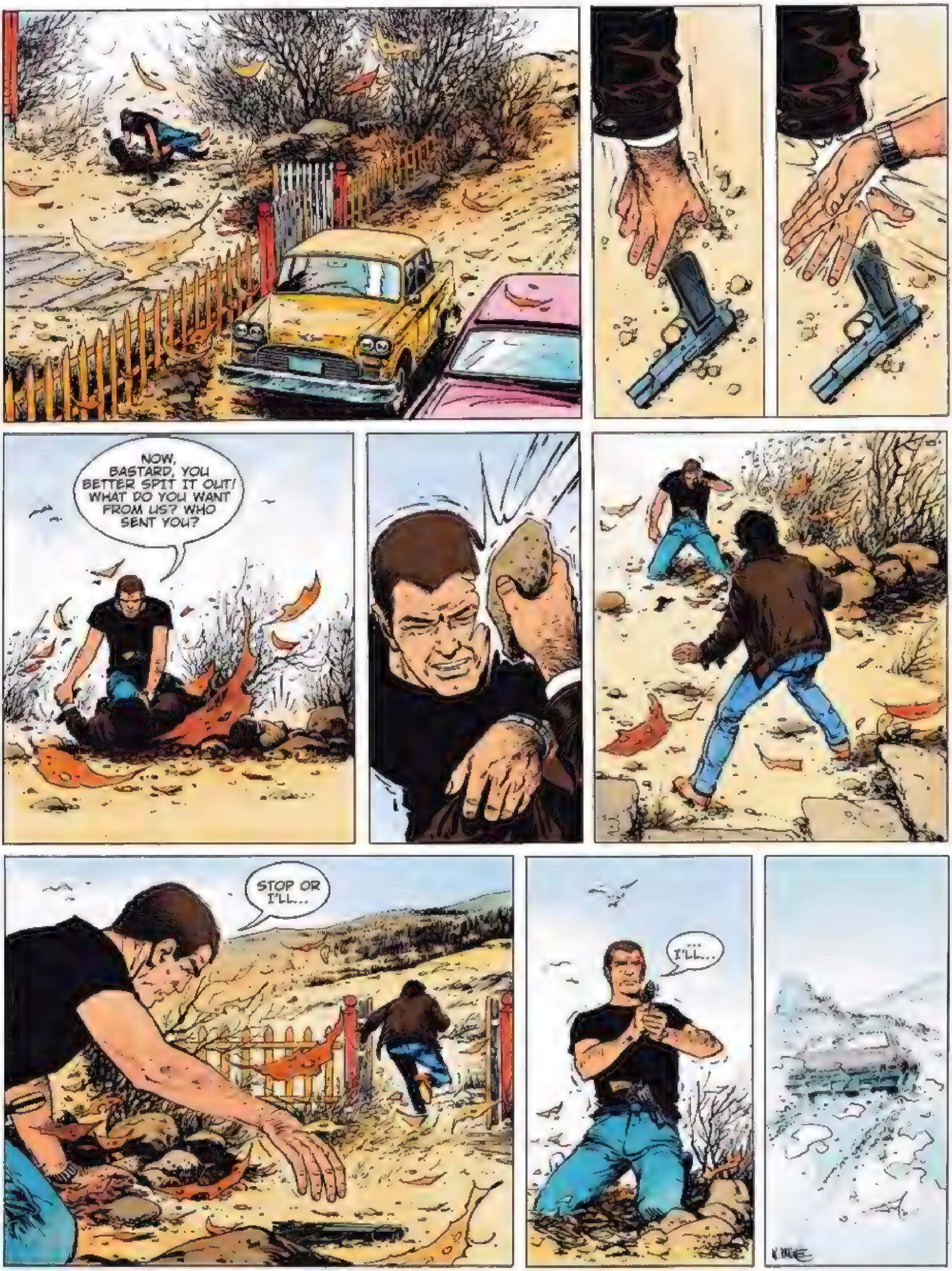

MARTHA, WHY DO ABE AND SALLY CALL ME ALAN? IT WAS THEIR SON'S NAME, RIGHT?
YES. THEIR ONLY SON. THEY NEVER TALK ABOUT HIM.
HE DIED FAR FROM HERE, IN THE WAR. IT WAS A DIRTY WAR, ALAN. A WAR WE COULDN'T UNDERSTAND, WHICH KILLED THOUSANDS OF OTHER YOUNG MEN LIKE HIM.
AND THEN YOU EMERGED FROM NOWHERE INTO THEIR LIFE, WOUNDED, WEAK AND NEEDING THEM. THEY QUITE NATURALLY TRANSFERRED THEIR FRUSTRATED LOVE ON YOU, AS IF...
AS IF I WERE A CHILD; ISN'T THAT WHAT YOU MEAN?
A GROWNUP CHILD, WITHOUT MEMORIES, FAMILY, FRIENDS, PAST OR IDENTITY, WITHOUT **ANYTHING!** I'VE BEEN TORTURING MYSELF TRYING TO DIG INTO MY MEMORY, BUT ALL I SEE IS WHITE. NOTHING BUT A BIG, BLANK **WHITE SPACE!**
MARTHA, IS THERE ANY CHANCE THAT I'LL GET MY MEMORY BACK ONE DAY?
IT'S POSSIBLE, ALAN. BUT, HONESTLY, I HAVE NO IDEA.
BUT I CAN TALK, READ AND WRITE... I KNOW WHAT A CITY, A TRAIN, A TELEPHONE AND A TELEVISION ARE... I CAN DRIVE AND I CAN COUNT...
IT'S ALL PART OF YOUR COLLECTIVE MEMORY AND ACQUIRED REFLEXES, MY DEAR.
I'LL TRY TO EXPLAIN ALL THIS WITHOUT BEING TOO TECHNICAL... NOW, ARE WE GOING TO GET SOME OF THOSE CLAMS?

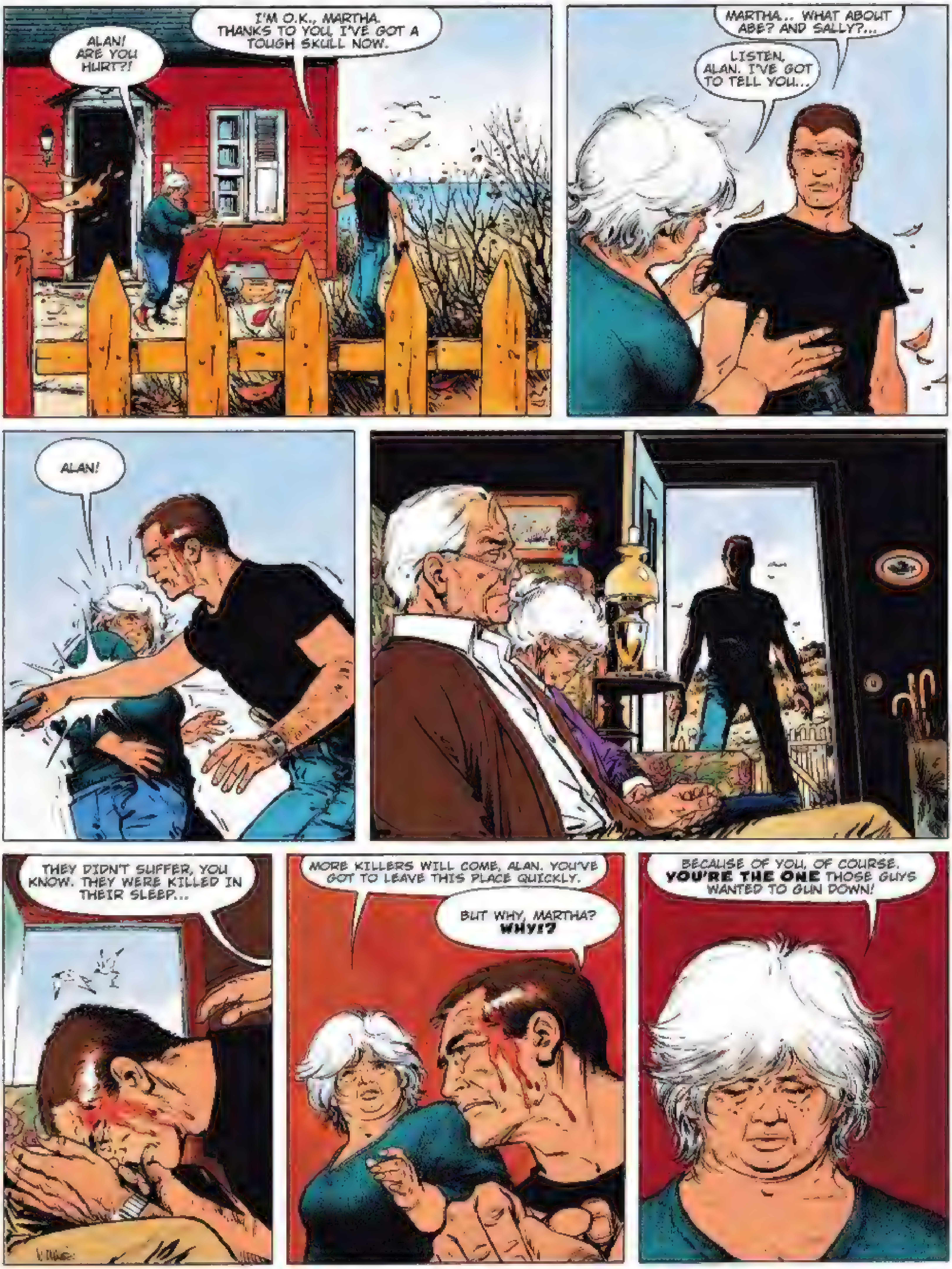

THE BULLET WENT THROUGH THE FIBROUS AREAS OF THE THALAMUS AND THE CEREBRAL CORTEX, DAMAGING THE LIMBIC LOBE WHERE MEMORY IS STORED...
ADD TO THAT THE SHOCK AND EMOTIONAL TENSION, WHICH CAUSED A KIND OF MENTAL APHASIA. THAT TENSION WAS PROGRESSIVELY REDUCED DURING YOUR RECOVERY, AND YOU FOUND THE USE OF YOUR REFLEXES AND WHAT I CALLED YOUR COLLECTIVE MEMORY...
UNFORTUNATELY, THE PHYSICAL LESION IS THERE TO STAY. IT WIPED OUT THE AREA IN YOUR INDIVIDUAL MEMORY WHERE YOUR PERSONAL HISTORY IS STORED.
AND THIS DAMAGE WOULD BE... IRREVERSIBLE?
THERE'S NO WAY TO TELL, ALAN. THE BRAIN'S BILLIONS OF CELLS ARE AN INFINITELY COMPLEX MOSAIC THAT IS STILL "TERRA INCOGNITA" FOR US...
YOUR MEMORY MAY COME BACK ALL AT ONCE FOLLOWING A SHOCK, OR IN BITS, OR NOT AT ALL.
SO, THERE'S A CHANCE I'LL NEVER KNOW?... THIS BULLET WOUND, THIS TATTOO... WHO AM I, MARTHA? A COP? A GANGSTER? A SECRET AGENT? A MERCENARY? OR A SIMPLE TOURIST ROBBED BY THUGS? **WHO AM I, FOR GOD'S SAKE!?**
I PROBABLY HAVE PARENTS SOMEWHERE, A WIFE AND KIDS WAITING FOR ME, FRIENDS WHO ARE GETTING WORRIED, AND THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO. **NOTHING! NOTHING!**
CALM DOWN, PLEASE...

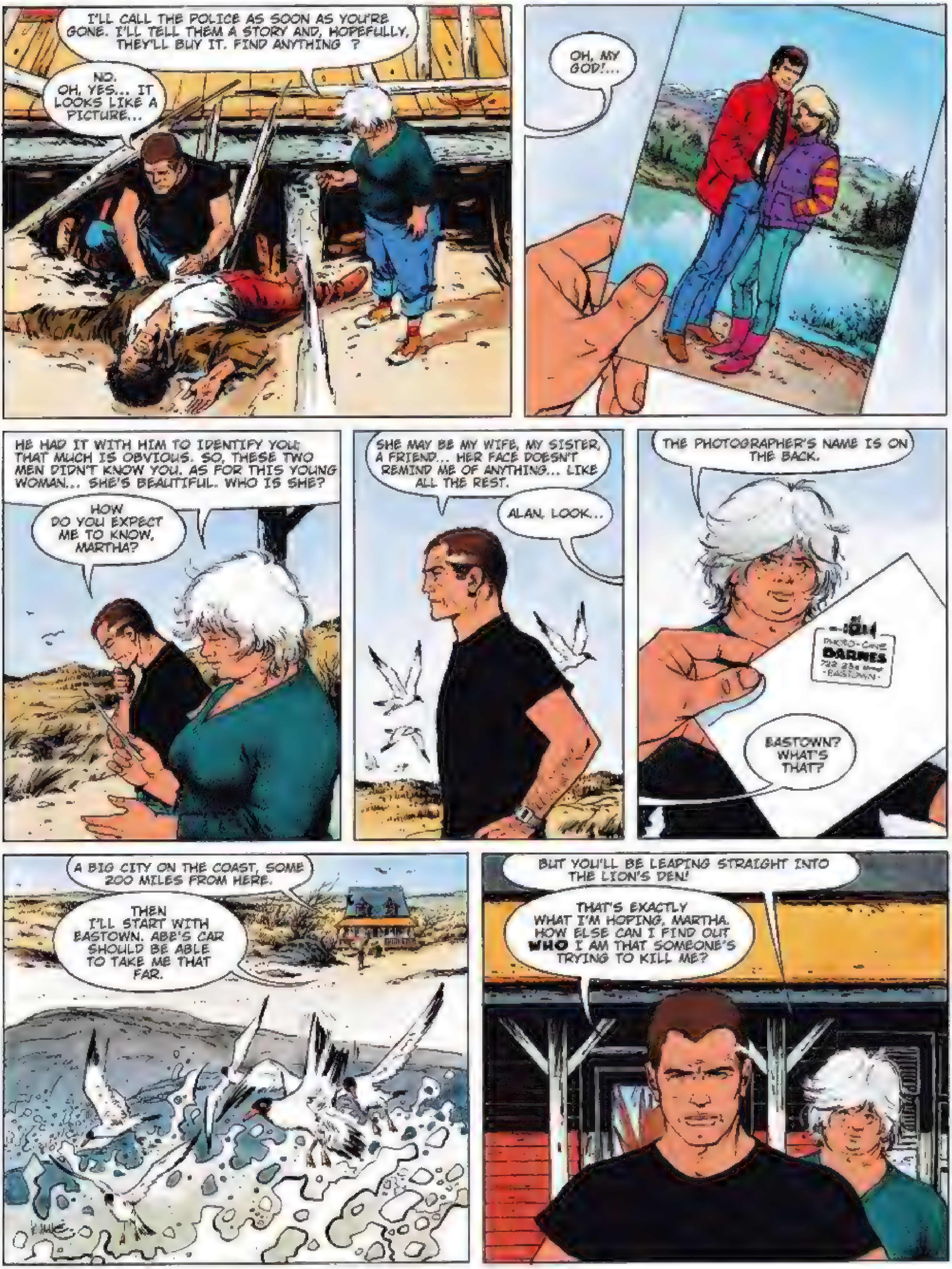

I UNDERSTAND, BELIEVE ME. BUT YOU'RE NOT ENTIRELY WITHOUT FRIENDS... OR FAMILY. ABE AND SALLY ALREADY LOVE YOU VERY MUCH.
YOU'RE RIGHT. THEY'RE WONDERFUL, BUT...
NOW THAT YOU'RE BACK IN SHAPE PHYSICALLY, WE'LL START LOOKING FOR YOUR PAST. I'LL HELP YOU, ALAN.
WHY SHOULD YOU? I ALREADY OWE YOU SO MUCH, MARTHA.
NAAAH, I'VE GOT PLENTY OF TIME. AND I OWE YOU SOMETHING TOO: SINCE I STARTED TAKING CARE OF YOU, I HAVEN'T TOUCHED A SINGLE GLASS OF SCOTCH. I'D LIKE THE TREATMENT TO LAST LONGER.
BESIDES, I KIND OF LIKE YOU, TOO... ALAN! WHAT'S GOING ON?
PRONTO! HOW TERRIBLE! WHAT THE HECK IS...?
DUCK, QUICK!!
BANG
BANG

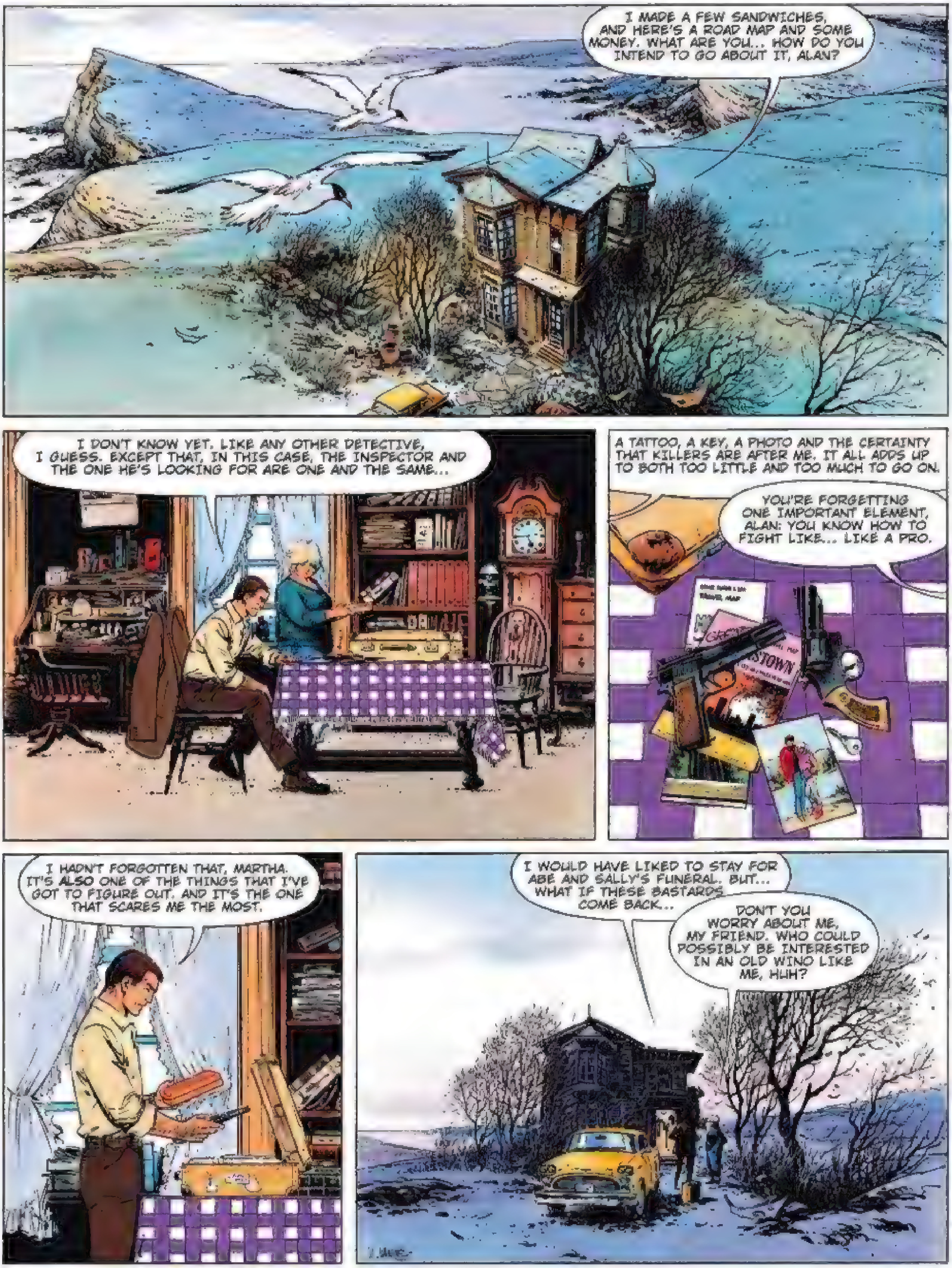

DID YOU GET HIM?
DON'T KNOW. LET ME CHECK.
BUT WATCH OUT...
ARE YOU KIDDING? THIS BOZO DOESN'T EVEN HAVE A GUN.
HEY! HE'S...
BANG! BANG!
CHUCK!
CHUCK, DAMN IT, WHAT ARE YOU DOING!?
WHERE DID THE BASTARD GO?...

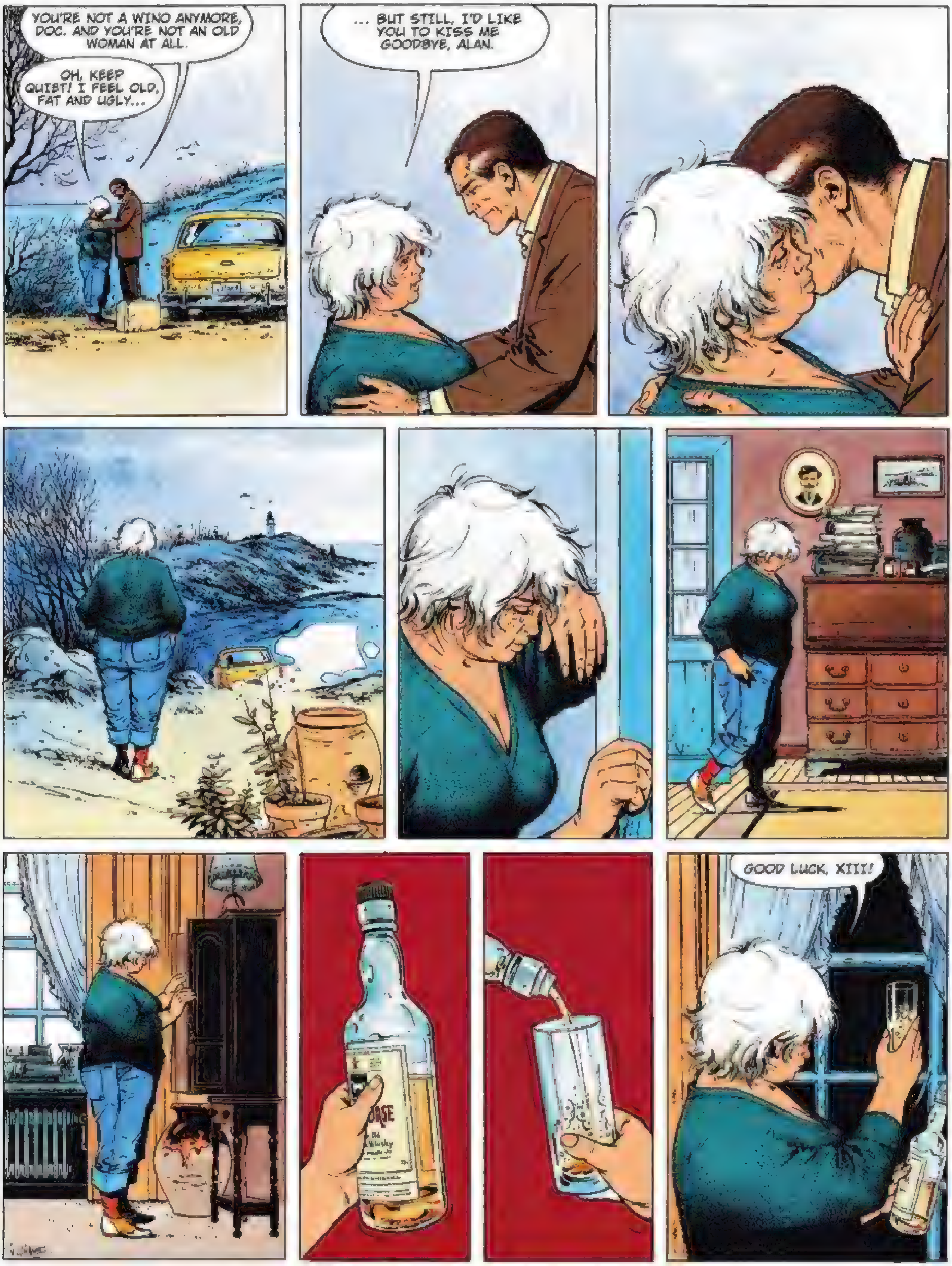

!?
YOU SONOFAGUN, I'M GONNA TEACH YOU A LESSON YOU WON'T FORGET!...
BANG BANG BANG BANG
?!?!
YOO-HOO!

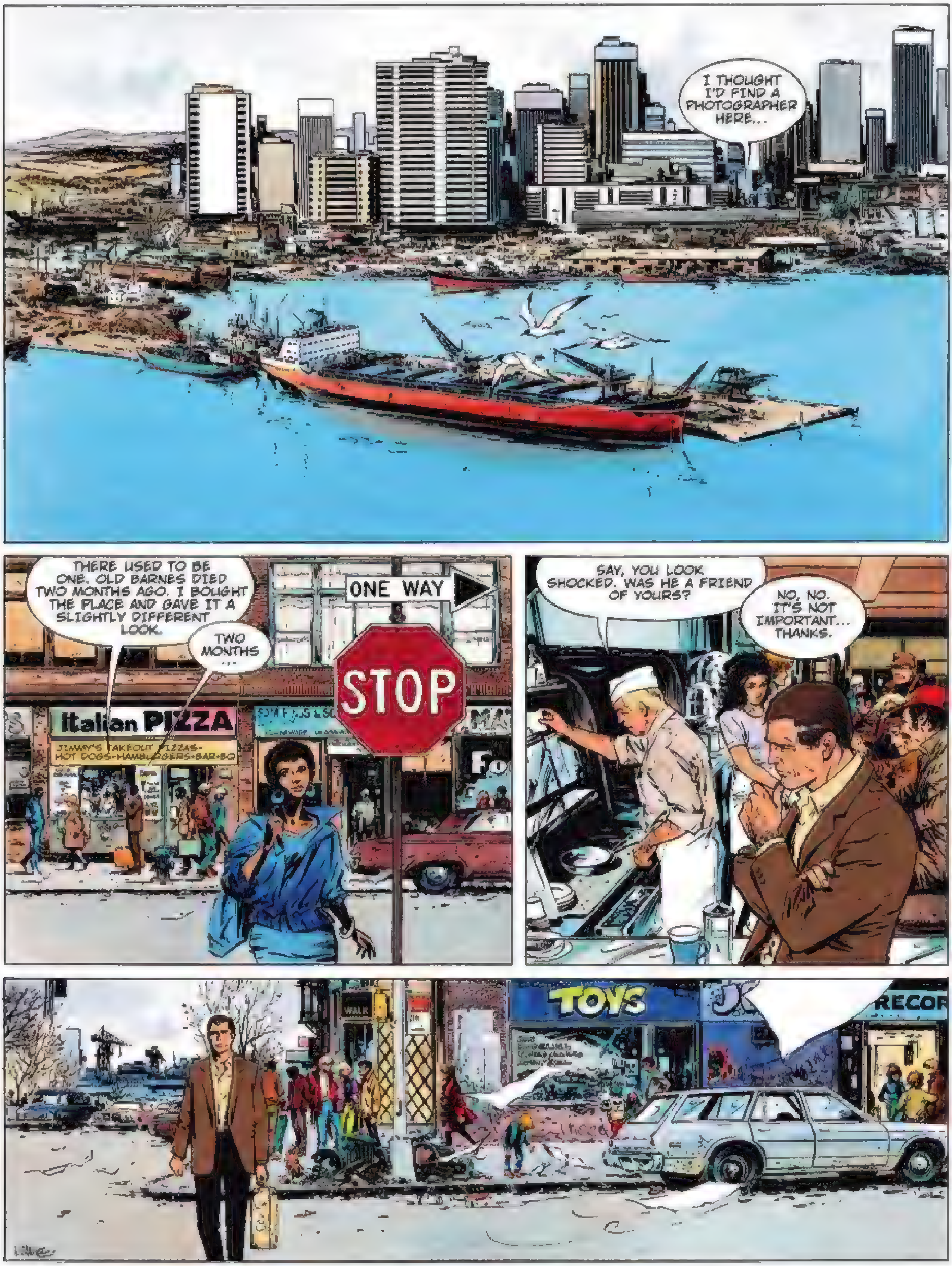

NOW, BASTARD, YOU BETTER SPIT IT OUT! WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM US? WHO SENT YOU?
STOP OR I'LL...
... I'LL...

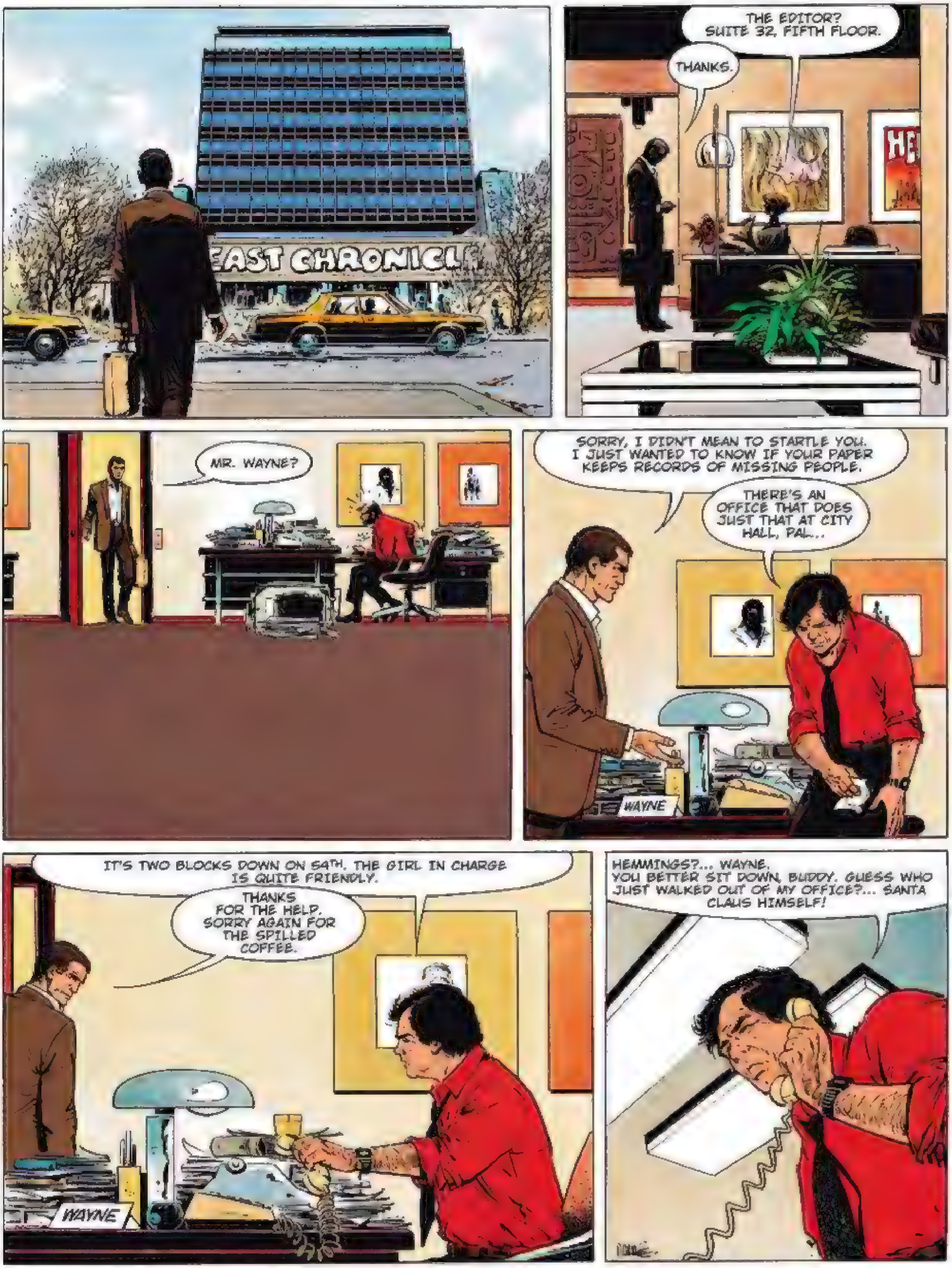

ALAN! ARE YOU HURT?!
I'M O.K., MARTHA. THANKS TO YOU, I'VE GOT A TOUGH SKULL NOW.
MARTHA... WHAT ABOUT ABE? AND SALLY?...
LISTEN, ALAN. I'VE GOT TO TELL YOU...
ALAN!
THEY DIDN'T SUFFER, YOU KNOW. THEY WERE KILLED IN THEIR SLEEP...
MORE KILLERS WILL COME, ALAN. YOU'VE GOT TO LEAVE THIS PLACE QUICKLY.
BUT WHY, MARTHA? **WHY!?**
BECAUSE OF YOU, OF COURSE. **YOU'RE THE ONE** THOSE GUYS WANTED TO GUN DOWN!

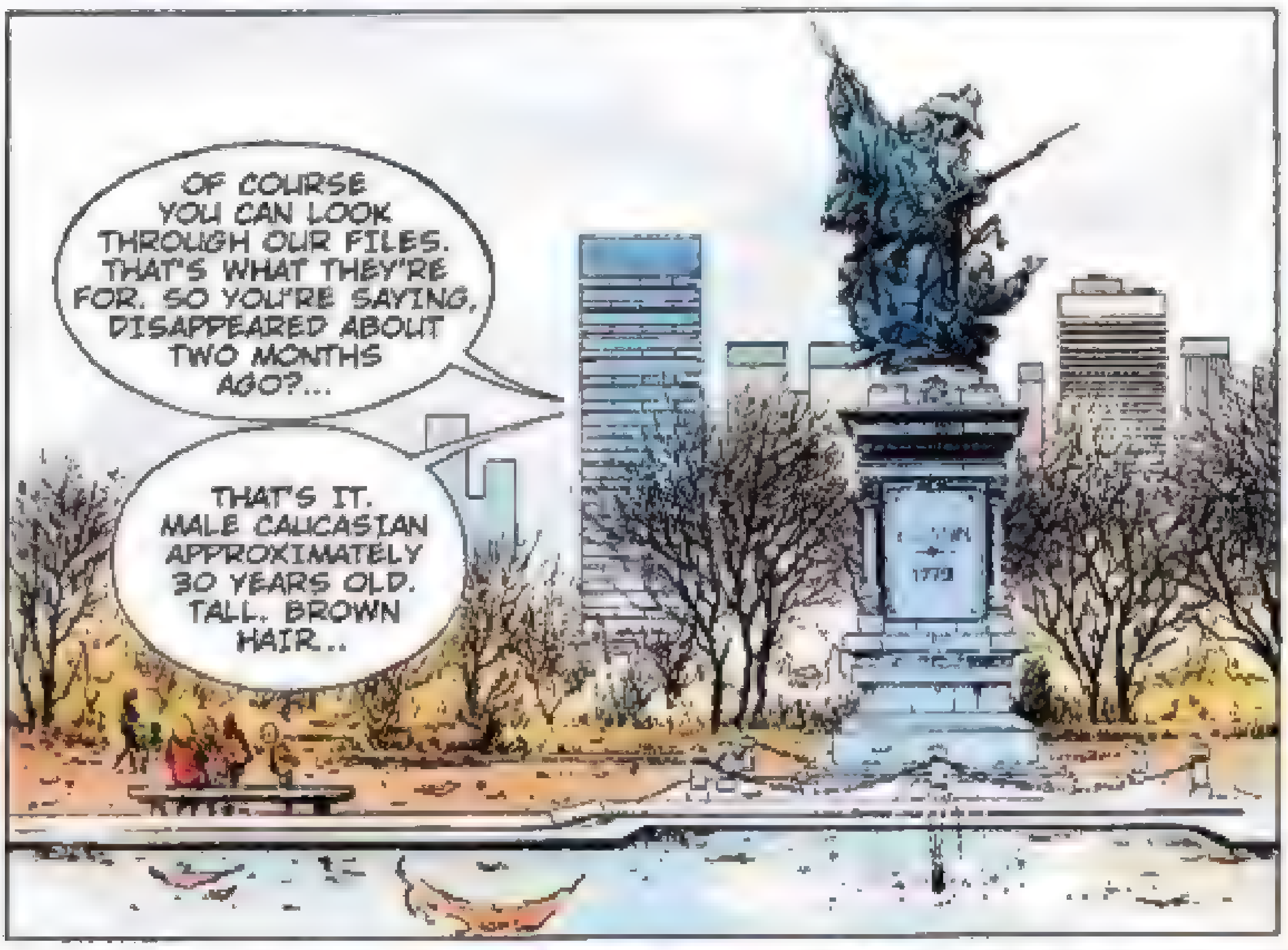

I'LL CALL THE POLICE AS SOON AS YOU'RE GONE. I'LL TELL THEM A STORY AND, HOPEFULLY, THEY'LL BUY IT. FIND ANYTHING ?
NO. OH, YES... IT LOOKS LIKE A PICTURE...
OH, MY GOD!...
HE HAD IT WITH HIM TO IDENTIFY YOU: THAT MUCH IS OBVIOUS. SO, THESE TWO MEN DIDN'T KNOW YOU. AS FOR THIS YOUNG WOMAN... SHE'S BEAUTIFUL. WHO IS SHE?
HOW DO YOU EXPECT ME TO KNOW, MARTHA?
SHE MAY BE MY WIFE, MY SISTER, A FRIEND... HER FACE DOESN'T REMIND ME OF ANYTHING... LIKE ALL THE REST.
ALAN, LOOK...
THE PHOTOGRAPHER'S NAME IS ON THE BACK.
PHOTO-CINE
DARNES
722 23rd street
-EASTOWN-
EASTOWN? WHAT'S THAT?
A BIG CITY ON THE COAST, SOME 200 MILES FROM HERE.
THEN I'LL START WITH EASTOWN. ABE'S CAR SHOULD BE ABLE TO TAKE ME THAT FAR.
BUT YOU'LL BE LEAPING STRAIGHT INTO THE LION'S DEN!
THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT I'M HOPING, MARTHA. HOW ELSE CAN I FIND OUT **WHO** I AM THAT SOMEONE'S TRYING TO KILL ME?

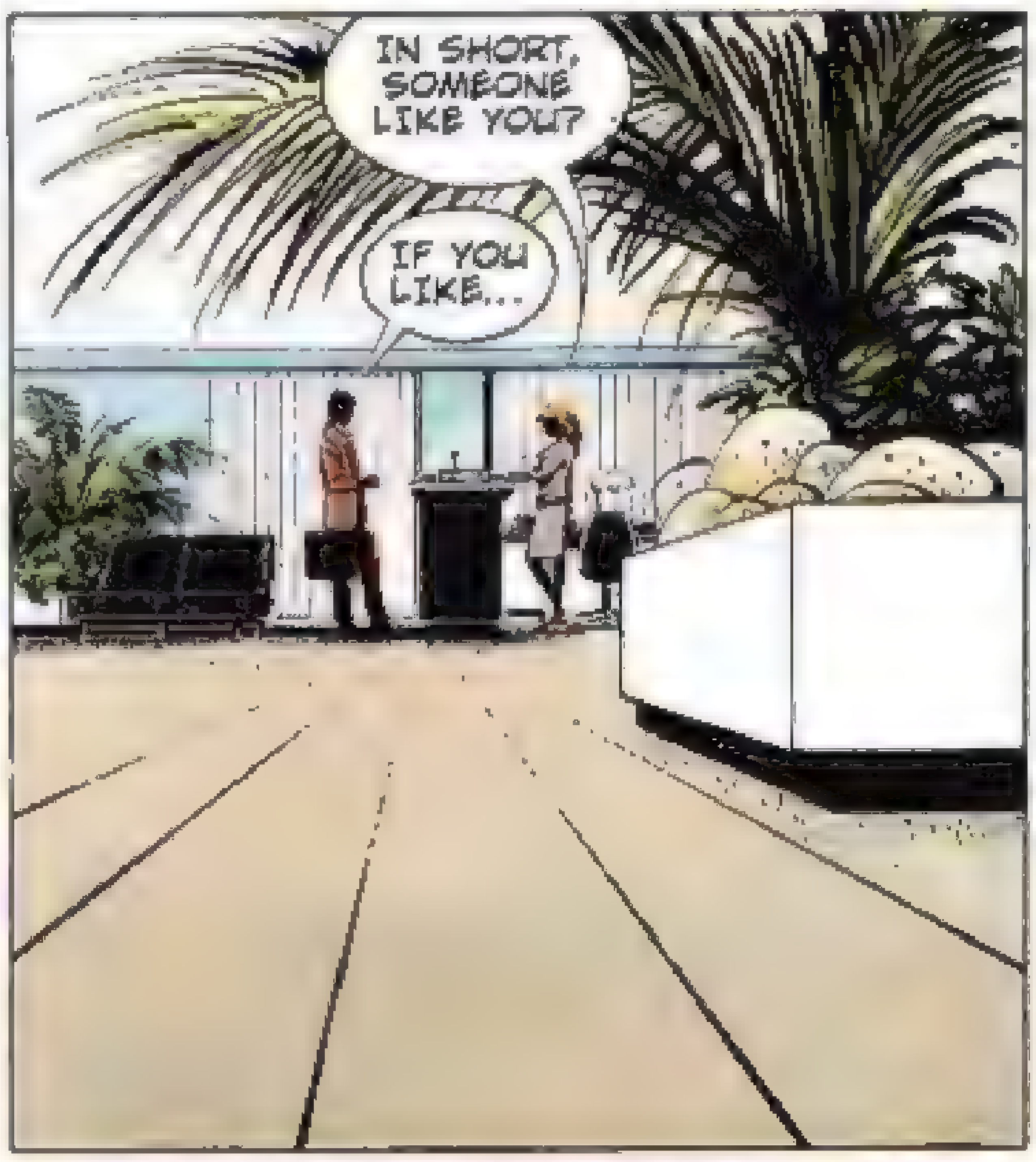

I MADE A FEW SANDWICHES, AND HERE'S A ROAD MAP AND SOME MONEY. WHAT ARE YOU... HOW DO YOU INTEND TO GO ABOUT IT, ALAN?
I DON'T KNOW YET. LIKE ANY OTHER DETECTIVE, I GUESS. EXCEPT THAT, IN THIS CASE, THE INSPECTOR AND THE ONE HE'S LOOKING FOR ARE ONE AND THE SAME...
A TATTOO, A KEY, A PHOTO AND THE CERTAINTY THAT KILLERS ARE AFTER ME. IT ALL ADDS UP TO BOTH TOO LITTLE AND TOO MUCH TO GO ON.
YOU'RE FORGETTING ONE IMPORTANT ELEMENT, ALAN: YOU KNOW HOW TO FIGHT LIKE... LIKE A PRO.
I HADN'T FORGOTTEN THAT, MARTHA. IT'S ALSO ONE OF THE THINGS THAT I'VE GOT TO FIGURE OUT. AND IT'S THE ONE THAT SCARES ME THE MOST.
I WOULD HAVE LIKED TO STAY FOR ABE AND SALLY'S FUNERAL. BUT... WHAT IF THESE BASTARDS COME BACK...
DON'T YOU WORRY ABOUT ME, MY FRIEND. WHO COULD POSSIBLY BE INTERESTED IN AN OLD WINO LIKE ME, HUH?

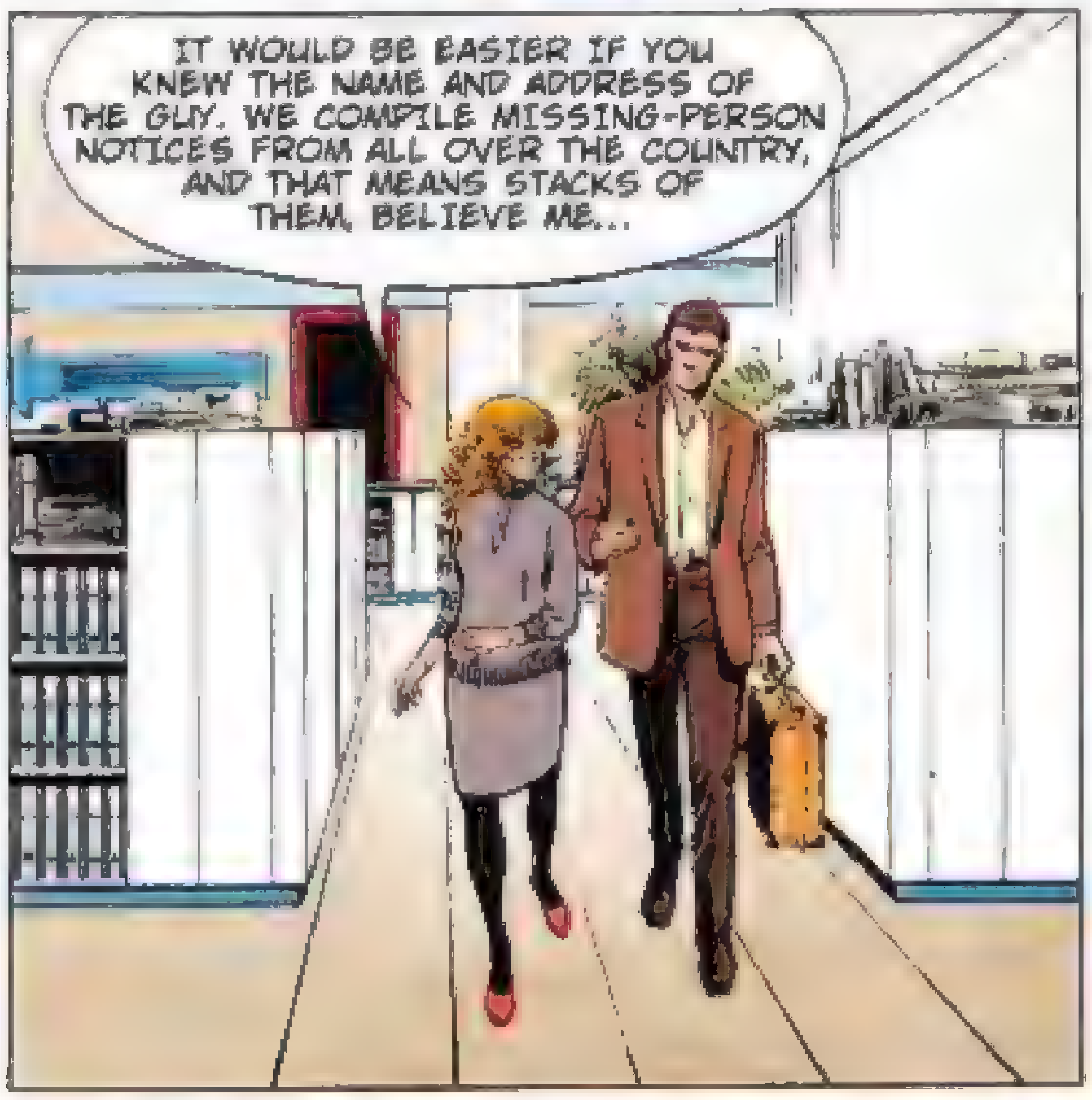

YOU'RE NOT A WINO ANYMORE, DOC. AND YOU'RE NOT AN OLD WOMAN AT ALL.
OH, KEEP QUIET! I FEEL OLD, FAT AND UGLY...
... BUT STILL, I'D LIKE YOU TO KISS ME GOODBYE, ALAN.
GOOD LUCK, XIII!

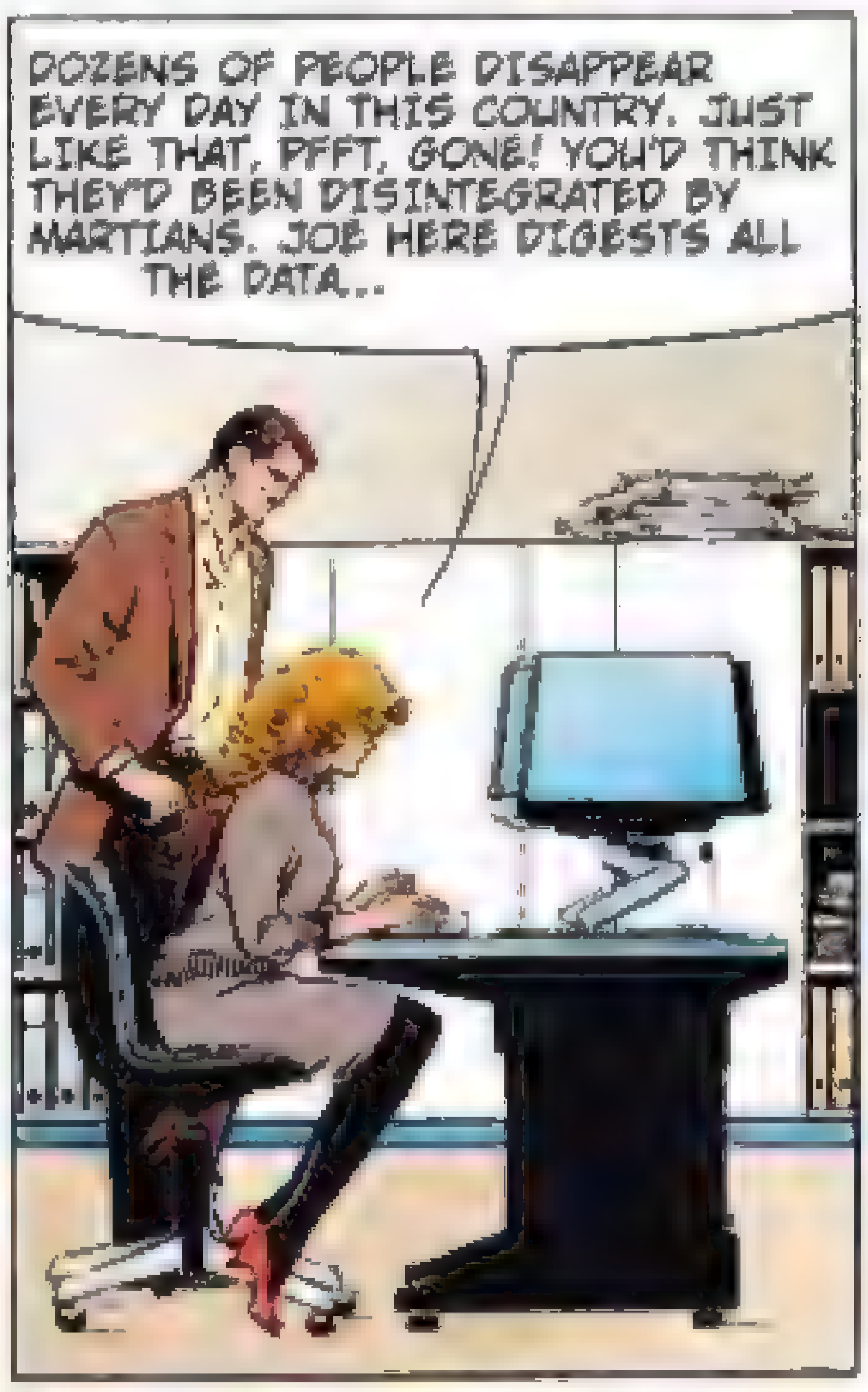

I THOUGHT I'D FIND A PHOTOGRAPHER HERE...
THERE USED TO BE ONE. OLD BARNES DIED TWO MONTHS AGO. I BOUGHT THE PLACE AND GAVE IT A SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT LOOK.
TWO MONTHS ...
ONE WAY
STOP
Italian PIZZA
JIMMY'S TAKEOUT PIZZAS-HOT DOGS-HAMBURGERS-BAR-BQ
SAY, YOU LOOK SHOCKED. WAS HE A FRIEND OF YOURS?
NO, NO. IT'S NOT IMPORTANT... THANKS.
WALK
TOYS
RECOR

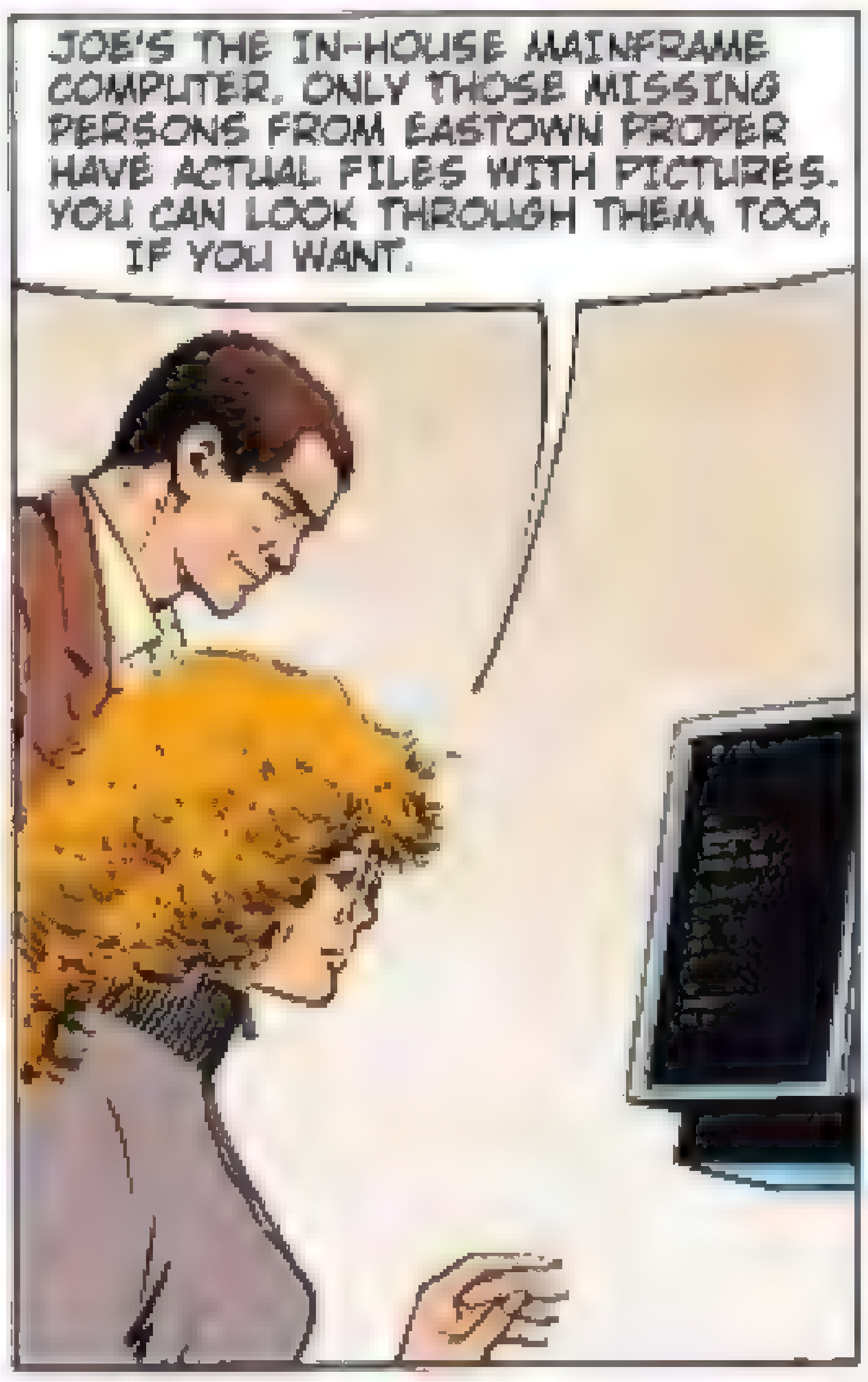

EAST CHRONICLE
THE EDITOR? SUITE 32, FIFTH FLOOR.
THANKS.
MR. WAYNE?
SORRY, I DIDN'T MEAN TO STARTLE YOU. I JUST WANTED TO KNOW IF YOUR PAPER KEEPS RECORDS OF MISSING PEOPLE.
THERE'S AN OFFICE THAT DOES JUST THAT AT CITY HALL, PAL...
WAYNE
IT'S TWO BLOCKS DOWN ON 54TH. THE GIRL IN CHARGE IS QUITE FRIENDLY.
THANKS FOR THE HELP. SORRY AGAIN FOR THE SPILLED COFFEE.
WAYNE
HEMMINGS?... WAYNE. YOU BETTER SIT DOWN, BUDDY. GUESS WHO JUST WALKED OUT OF MY OFFICE?... SANTA CLAUS HIMSELF!

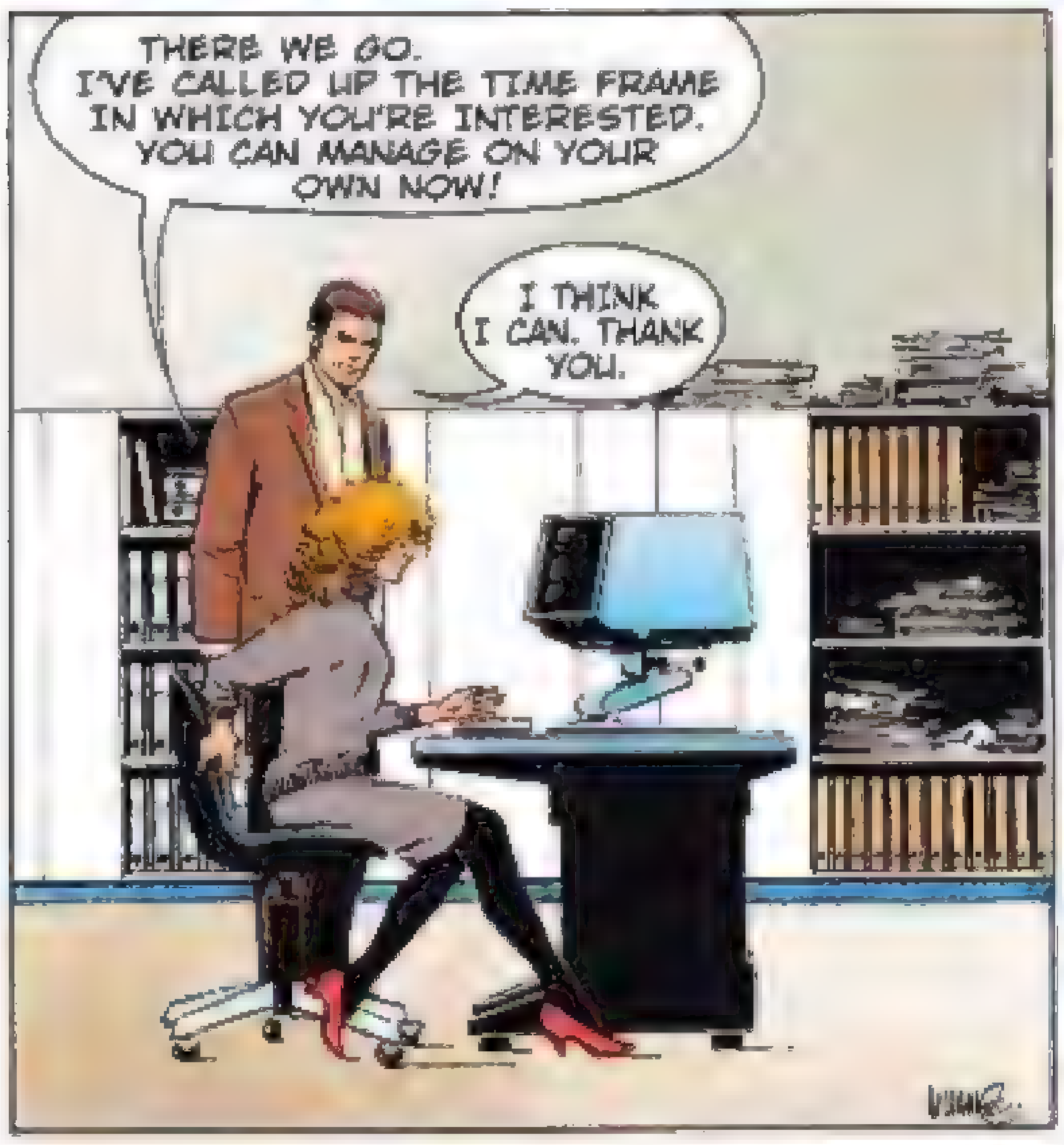

OF COURSE YOU CAN LOOK THROUGH OUR FILES. THAT'S WHAT THEY'RE FOR. SO YOU'RE SAYING, DISAPPEARED ABOUT TWO MONTHS AGO?...
THAT'S IT. MALE CAUCASIAN APPROXIMATELY 30 YEARS OLD. TALL. BROWN HAIR...

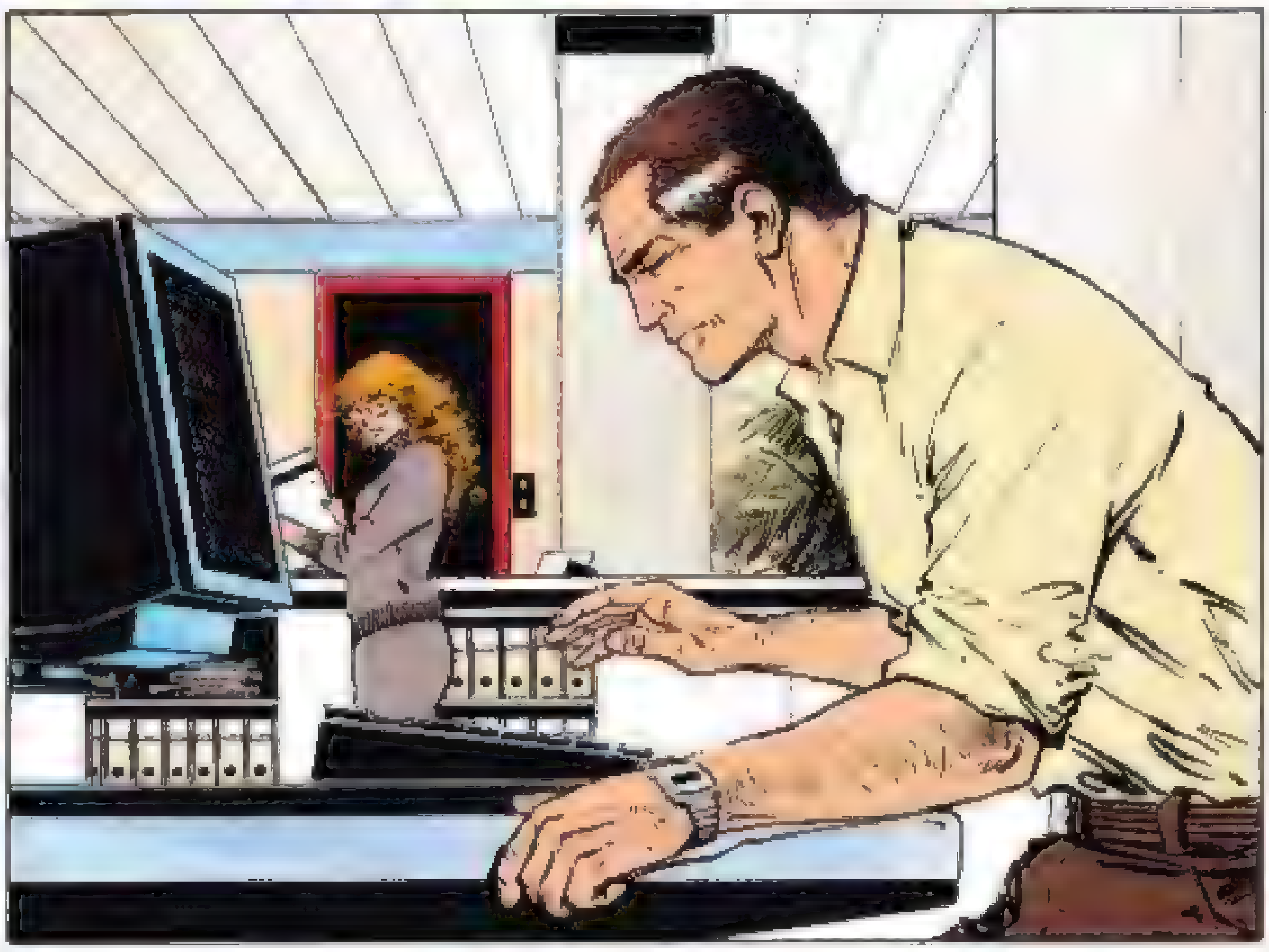

IN SHORT, SOMEONE LIKE YOU?
IF YOU LIKE...

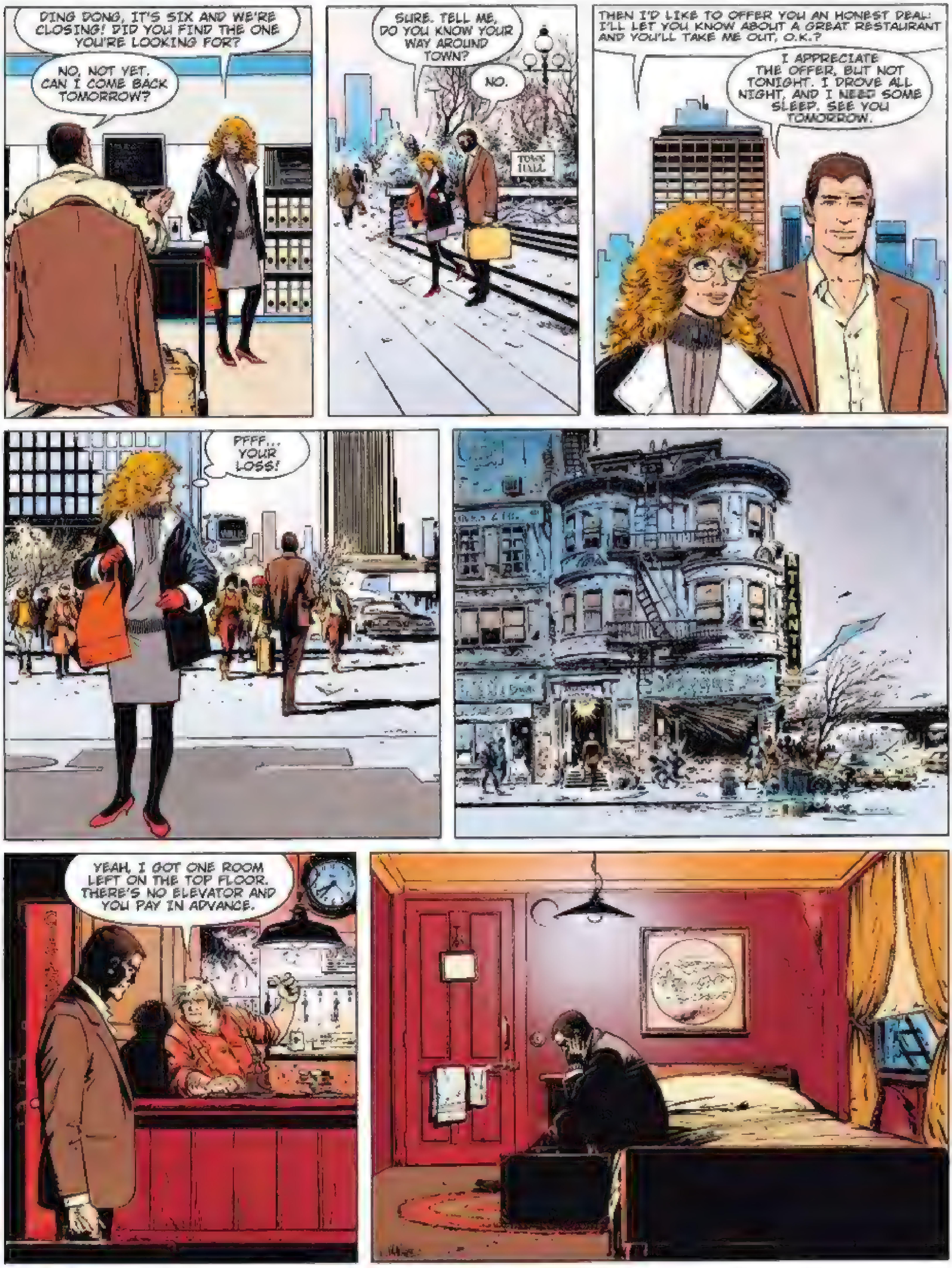

IT WOULD BE EASIER IF YOU KNEW THE NAME AND ADDRESS OF THE GUY. WE COMPILE MISSING-PERSON NOTICES FROM ALL OVER THE COUNTRY, AND THAT MEANS STACKS OF THEM, BELIEVE ME...

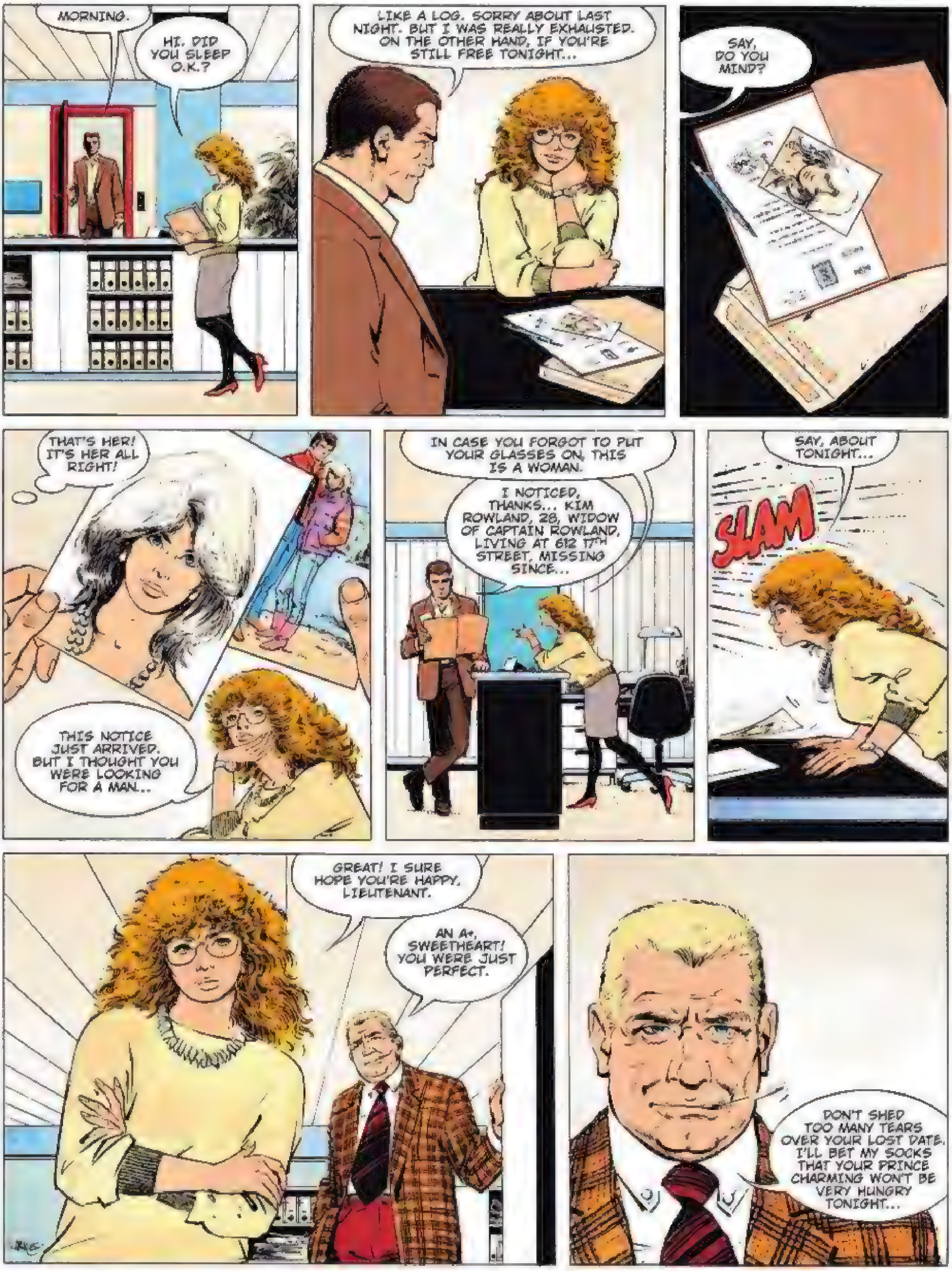

DOZENS OF PEOPLE DISAPPEAR EVERY DAY IN THIS COUNTRY. JUST LIKE THAT, PFFT, GONE! YOU'D THINK THEY'D BEEN DISINTEGRATED BY MARTIANS. JOE HERE DIGESTS ALL THE DATA...

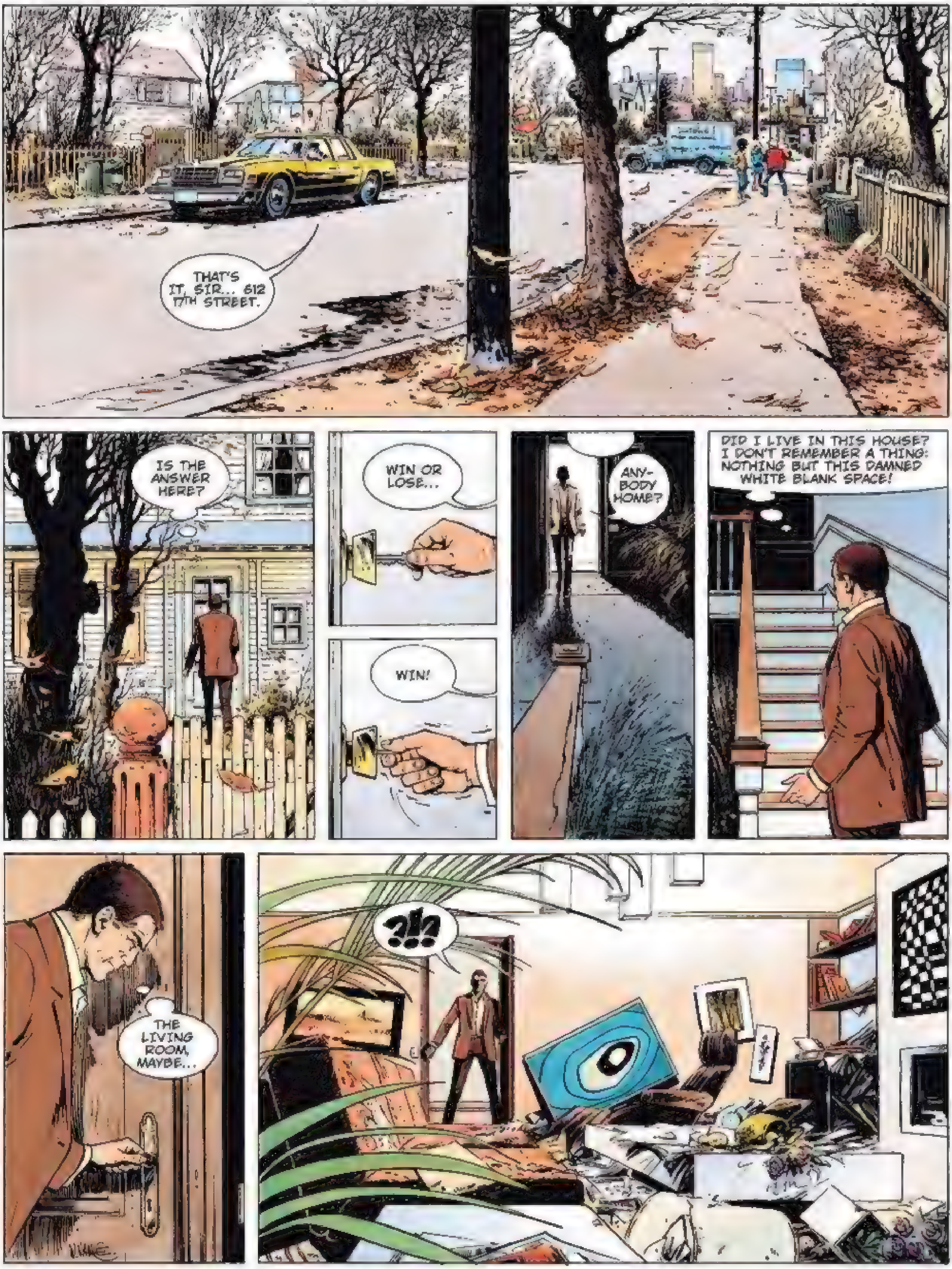

JOE'S THE IN-HOUSE MAINFRAME COMPUTER. ONLY THOSE MISSING PERSONS FROM EASTOWN PROPER HAVE ACTUAL FILES WITH PICTURES. YOU CAN LOOK THROUGH THEM, TOO, IF YOU WANT.

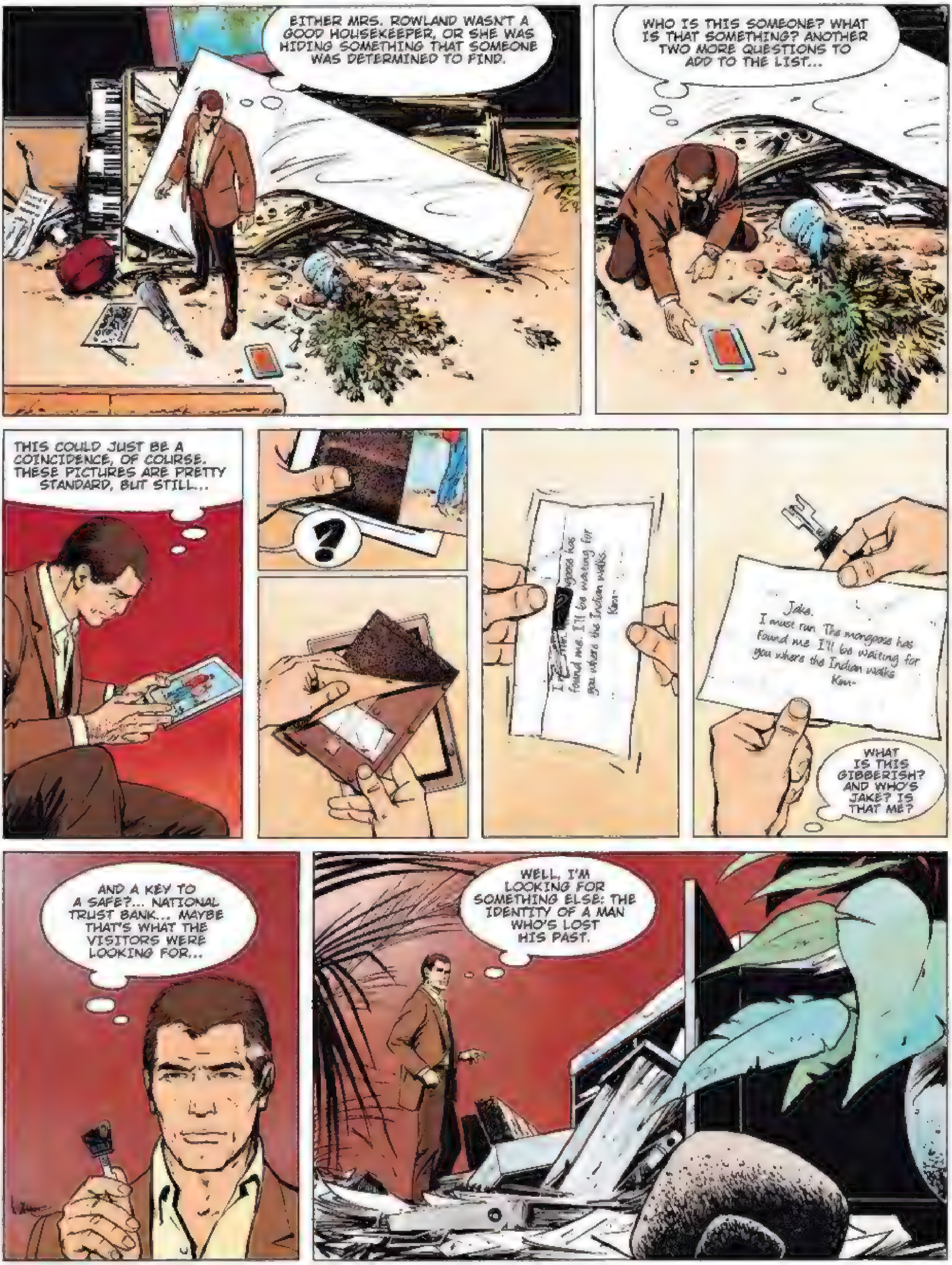

THERE WE GO. I'VE CALLED UP THE TIME FRAME IN WHICH YOU'RE INTERESTED. YOU CAN MANAGE ON YOUR OWN NOW!
I THINK I CAN. THANK YOU.

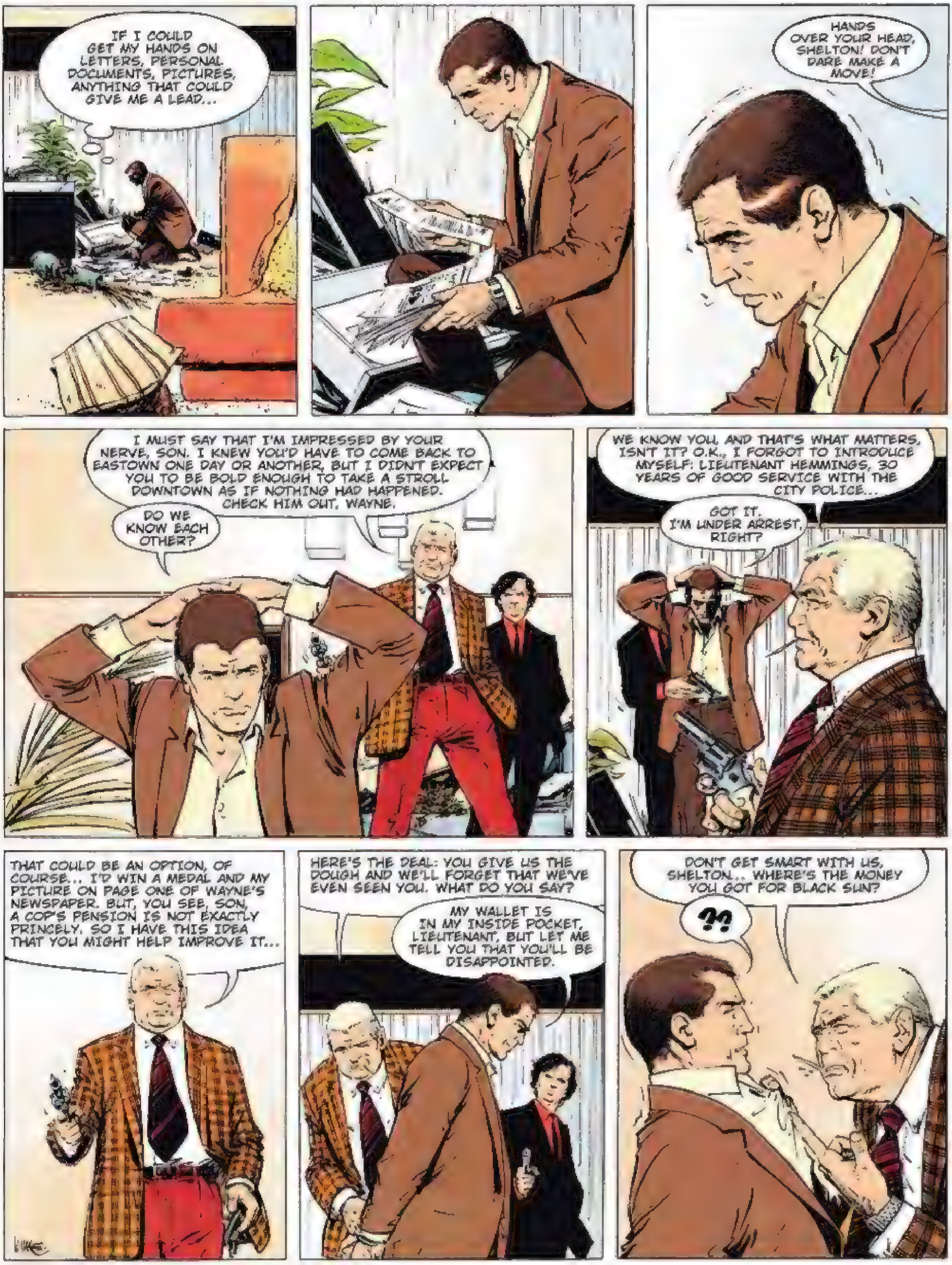


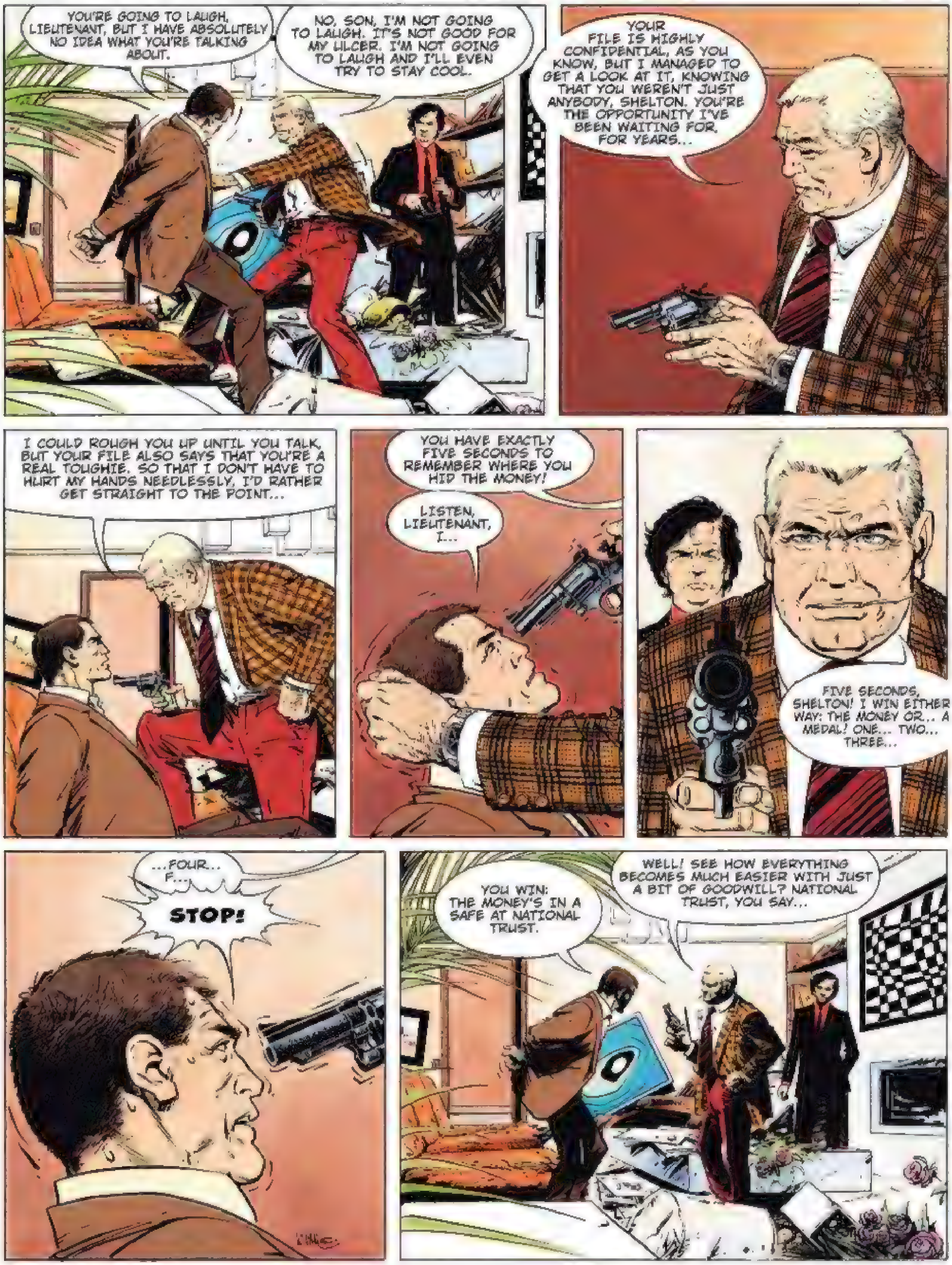

DING DONG, IT'S SIX AND WE'RE CLOSING! DID YOU FIND THE ONE YOU'RE LOOKING FOR?
NO, NOT YET. CAN I COME BACK TOMORROW?
SURE. TELL ME, DO YOU KNOW YOUR WAY AROUND TOWN?
NO.
TOWN HALL
THEN I'D LIKE TO OFFER YOU AN HONEST DEAL: I'LL LET YOU KNOW ABOUT A GREAT RESTAURANT AND YOU'LL TAKE ME OUT, O.K.?
I APPRECIATE THE OFFER, BUT NOT TONIGHT. I DROVE ALL NIGHT, AND I NEED SOME SLEEP. SEE YOU TOMORROW.
PFFF... YOUR LOSS!
YEAH, I GOT ONE ROOM LEFT ON THE TOP FLOOR. THERE'S NO ELEVATOR AND YOU PAY IN ADVANCE.

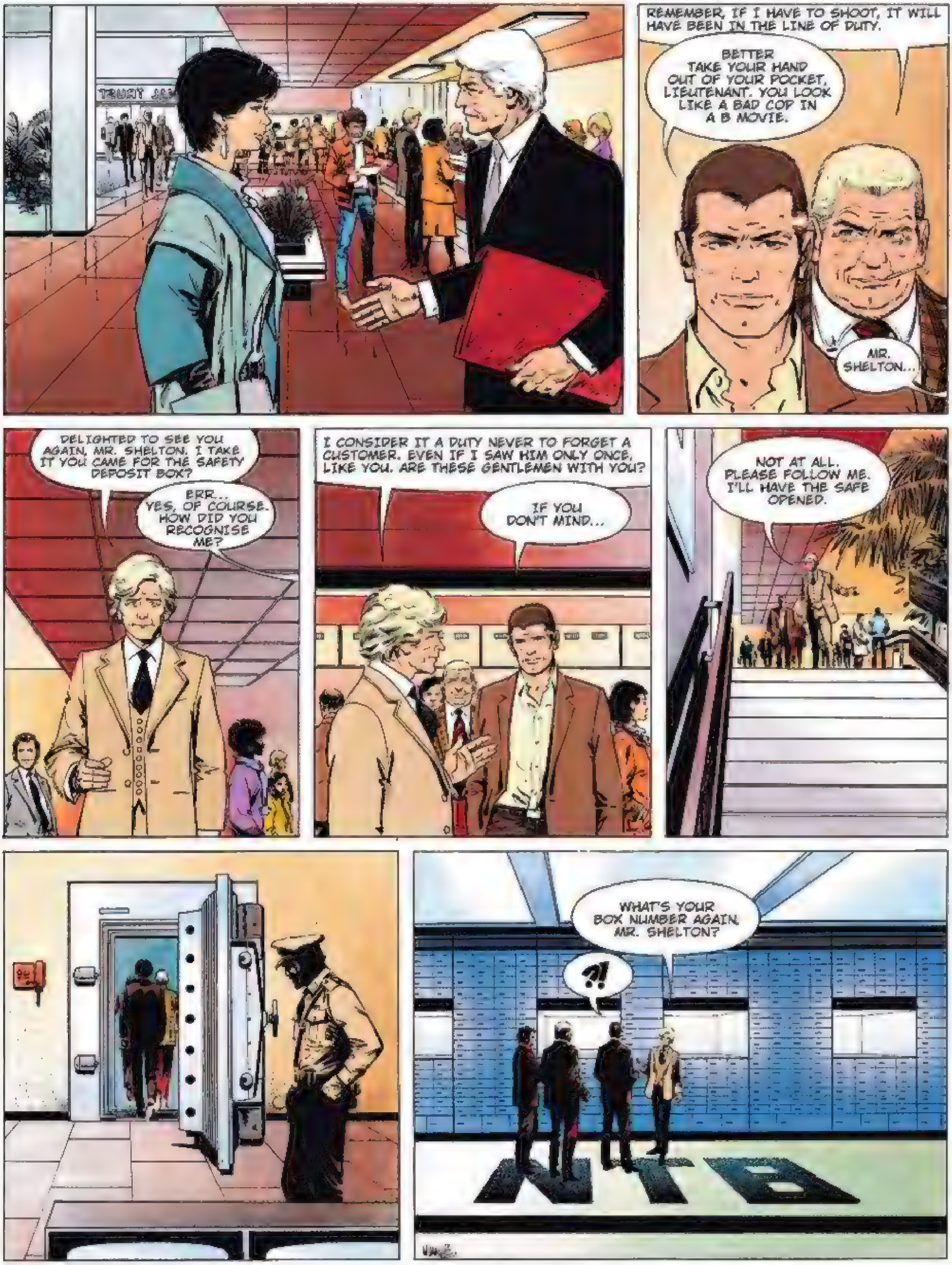

MORNING.
HI. DID YOU SLEEP O.K.?
LIKE A LOG. SORRY ABOUT LAST NIGHT. BUT I WAS REALLY EXHAUSTED. ON THE OTHER HAND, IF YOU'RE STILL FREE TONIGHT...
SAY, DO YOU MIND?
THAT'S HER! IT'S HER ALL RIGHT!
THIS NOTICE JUST ARRIVED. BUT I THOUGHT YOU WERE LOOKING FOR A MAN...
IN CASE YOU FORGOT TO PUT YOUR GLASSES ON, THIS IS A WOMAN.
I NOTICED, THANKS... KIM ROWLAND, 28, WIDOW OF CAPTAIN ROWLAND, LIVING AT 612 17TH STREET, MISSING SINCE...
SAY, ABOUT TONIGHT...
SLAM
GREAT! I SURE HOPE YOU'RE HAPPY, LIEUTENANT.
AN A+, SWEETHEART! YOU WERE JUST PERFECT.
DON'T SHED TOO MANY TEARS OVER YOUR LOST DATE. I'LL BET MY SOCKS THAT YOUR PRINCE CHARMING WON'T BE VERY HUNGRY TONIGHT...

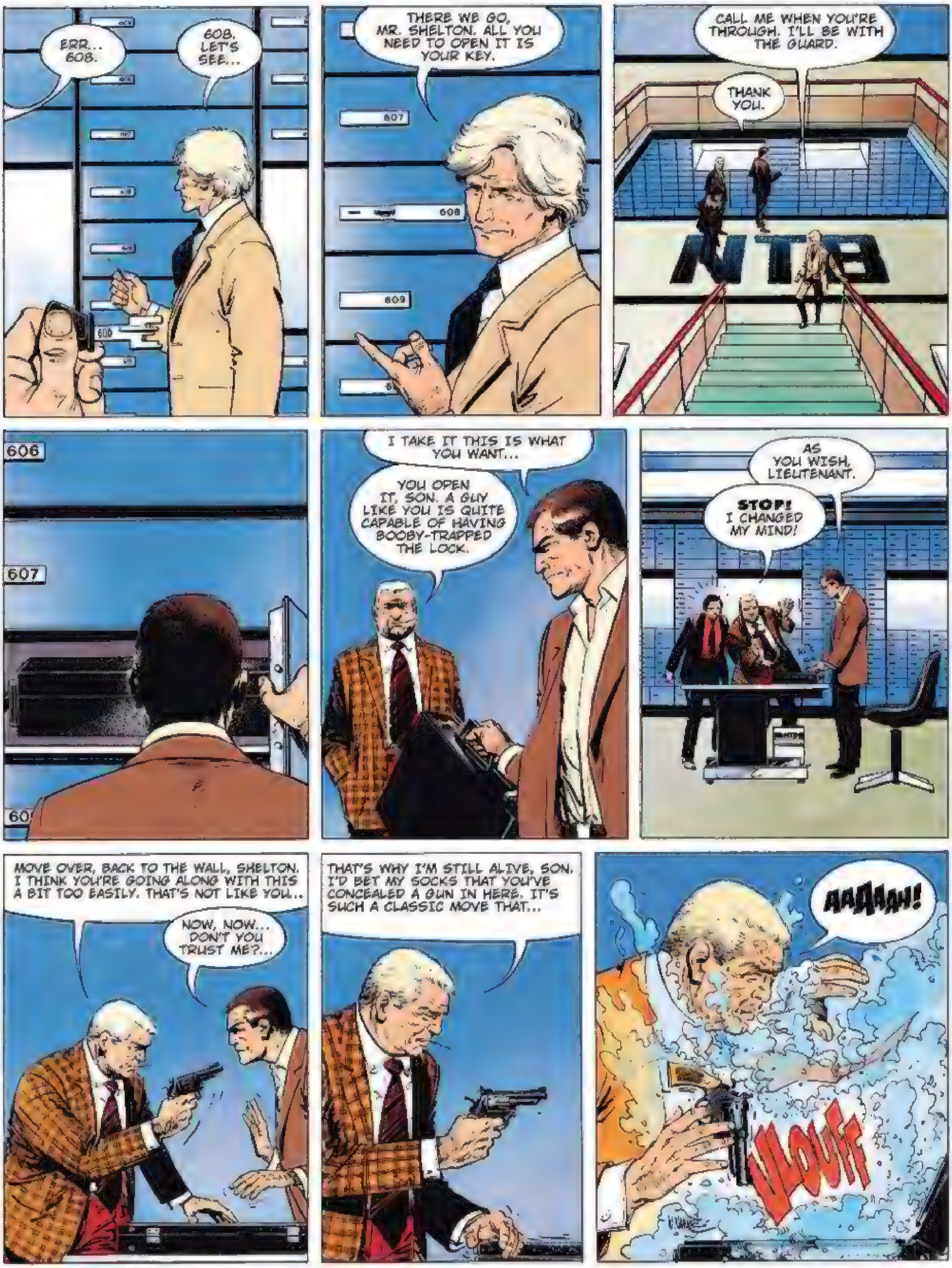

THAT'S IT, SIR... 612 17TH STREET.
IS THE ANSWER HERE?
WIN OR LOSE...
WIN!
ANY-BODY HOME?
DID I LIVE IN THIS HOUSE? I DON'T REMEMBER A THING: NOTHING BUT THIS DAMNED WHITE BLANK SPACE!
THE LIVING ROOM, MAYBE...
?!!?

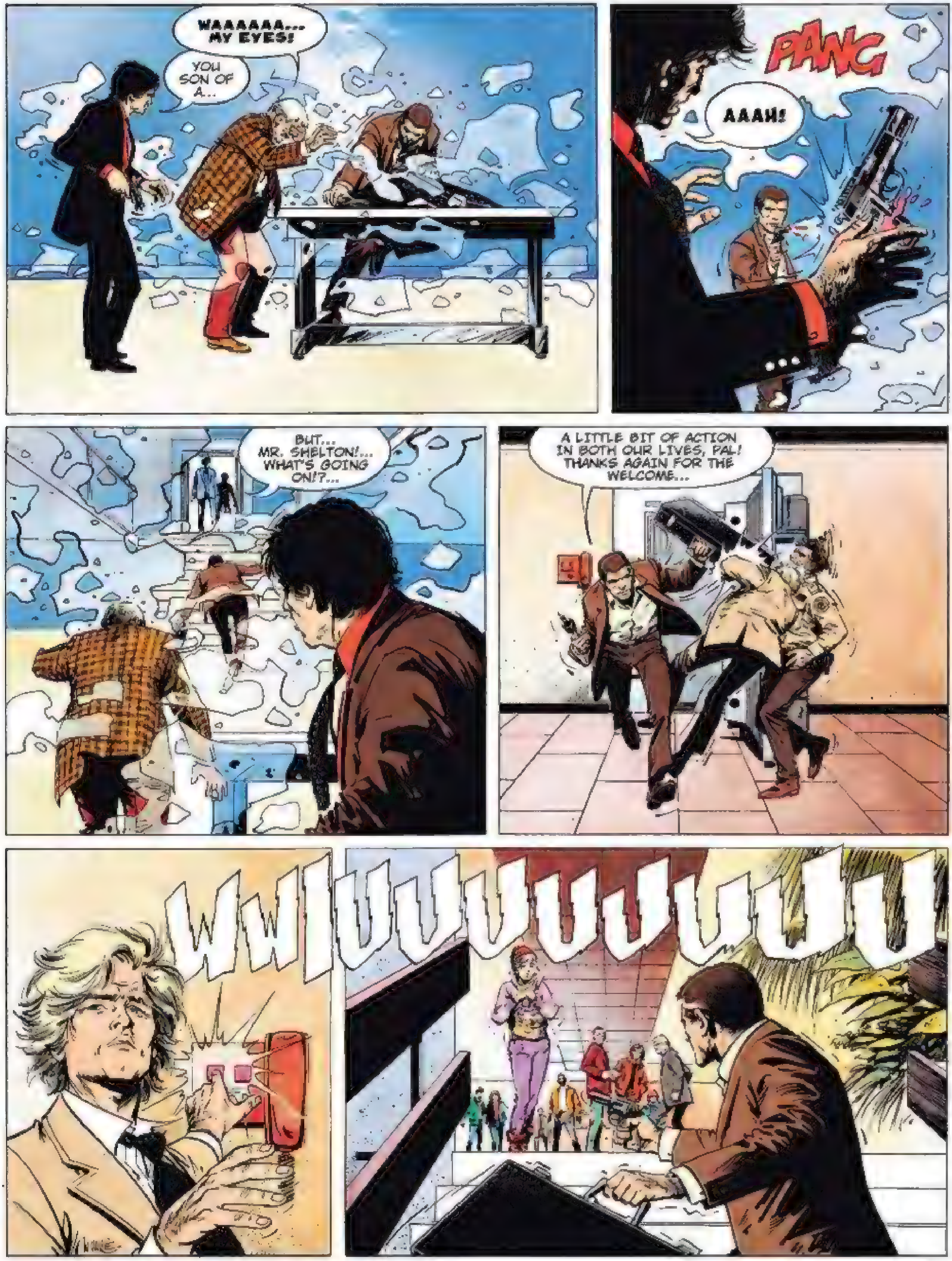

EITHER MRS. ROWLAND WASN'T A GOOD HOUSEKEEPER, OR SHE WAS HIDING SOMETHING THAT SOMEONE WAS DETERMINED TO FIND.
WHO IS THIS SOMEONE? WHAT IS THAT SOMETHING? ANOTHER TWO MORE QUESTIONS TO ADD TO THE LIST...
THIS COULD JUST BE A COINCIDENCE, OF COURSE. THESE PICTURES ARE PRETTY STANDARD, BUT STILL...
?
Jake.
I must run. The mongoose has found me. I'll be waiting for you where the Indian walks.
Kim.
WHAT IS THIS GIBBERISH? AND WHO'S JAKE? IS THAT ME?
AND A KEY TO A SAFE?... NATIONAL TRUST BANK... MAYBE THAT'S WHAT THE VISITORS WERE LOOKING FOR...
WELL, I'M LOOKING FOR SOMETHING ELSE: THE IDENTITY OF A MAN WHO'S LOST HIS PAST.

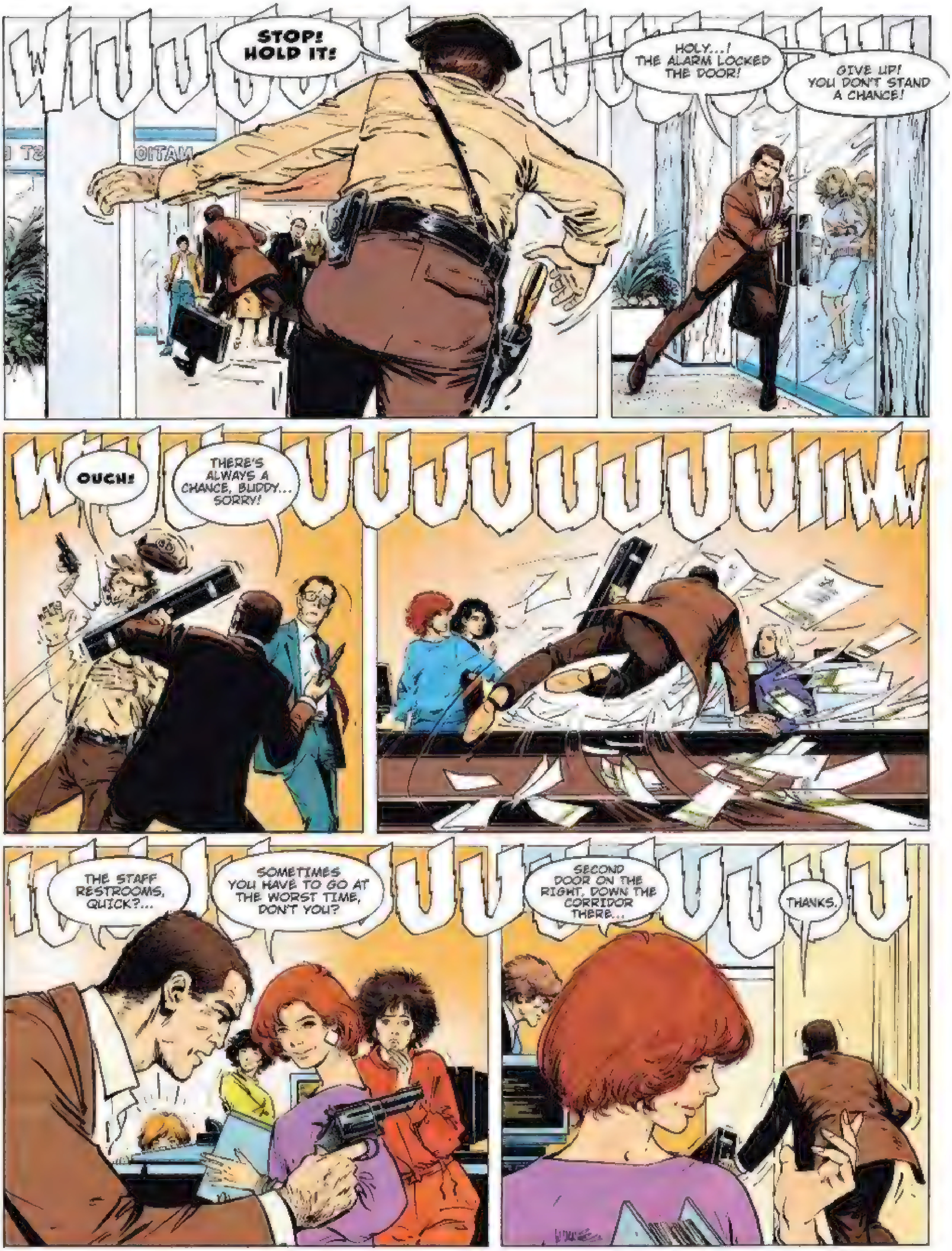

IF I COULD GET MY HANDS ON LETTERS, PERSONAL DOCUMENTS, PICTURES, ANYTHING THAT COULD GIVE ME A LEAD...
HANDS OVER YOUR HEAD, SHELTON! DON'T DARE MAKE A MOVE!
I MUST SAY THAT I'M IMPRESSED BY YOUR NERVE, SON. I KNEW YOU'D HAVE TO COME BACK TO EASTOWN ONE DAY OR ANOTHER, BUT I DIDN'T EXPECT YOU TO BE BOLD ENOUGH TO TAKE A STROLL DOWNTOWN AS IF NOTHING HAD HAPPENED. CHECK HIM OUT, WAYNE.
DO WE KNOW EACH OTHER?
WE KNOW YOU, AND THAT'S WHAT MATTERS, ISN'T IT? O.K., I FORGOT TO INTRODUCE MYSELF: LIEUTENANT HEMMINGS, 30 YEARS OF GOOD SERVICE WITH THE CITY POLICE...
GOT IT. I'M UNDER ARREST, RIGHT?
THAT COULD BE AN OPTION, OF COURSE... I'D WIN A MEDAL AND MY PICTURE ON PAGE ONE OF WAYNE'S NEWSPAPER. BUT, YOU SEE, SON, A COP'S PENSION IS NOT EXACTLY PRINCELY. SO I HAVE THIS IDEA THAT YOU MIGHT HELP IMPROVE IT...
HERE'S THE DEAL: YOU GIVE US THE DOUGH AND WE'LL FORGET THAT WE'VE EVEN SEEN YOU. WHAT DO YOU SAY?
MY WALLET IS IN MY INSIDE POCKET, LIEUTENANT, BUT LET ME TELL YOU THAT YOU'LL BE DISAPPOINTED.
DON'T GET SMART WITH US, SHELTON... WHERE'S THE MONEY YOU GOT FOR BLACK SUN?
??

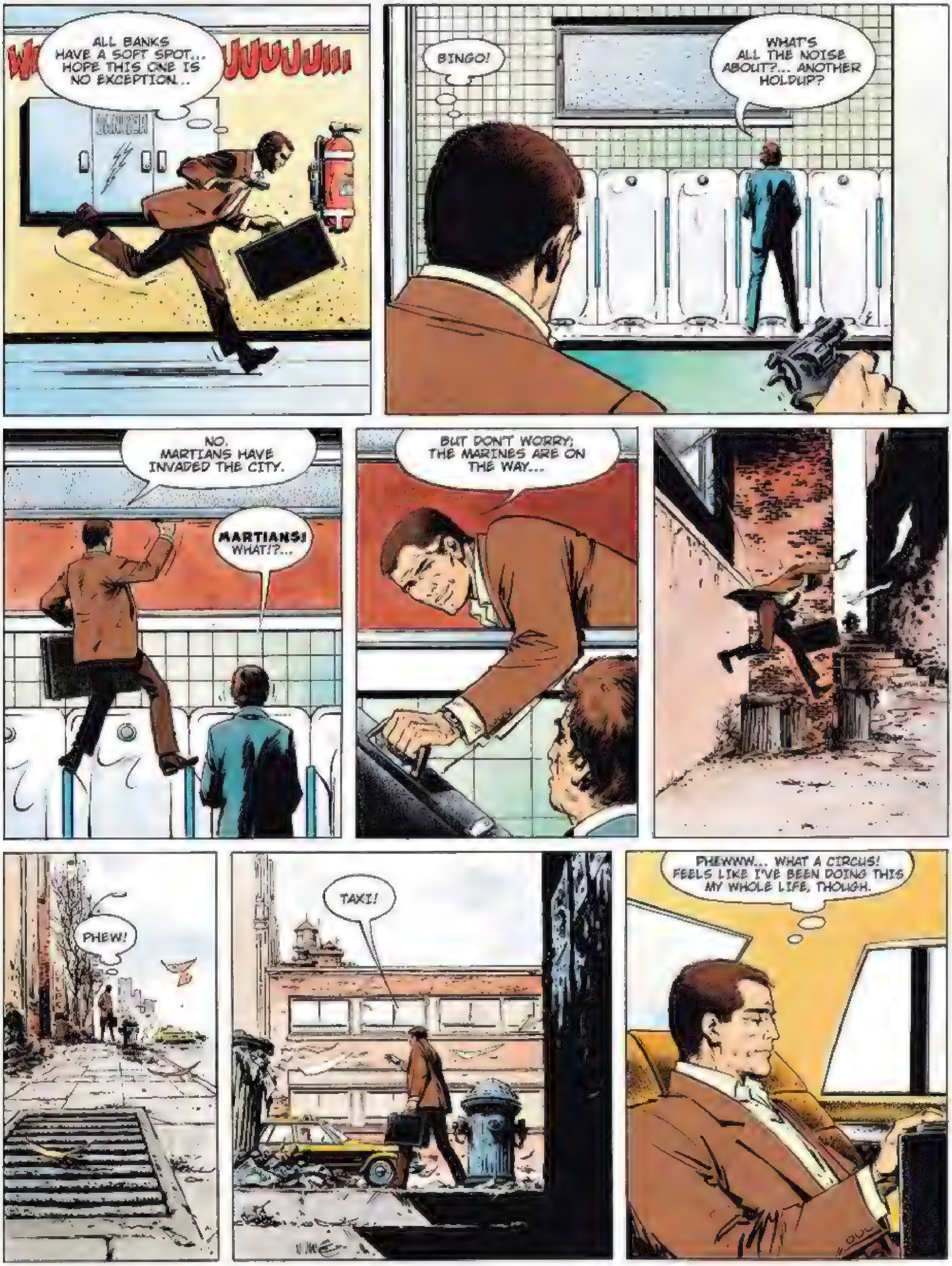

YOU'RE GOING TO LAUGH, LIEUTENANT, BUT I HAVE ABSOLUTELY NO IDEA WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT.
NO, SON, I'M NOT GOING TO LAUGH. IT'S NOT GOOD FOR MY ULCER. I'M NOT GOING TO LAUGH AND I'LL EVEN TRY TO STAY COOL.
YOUR FILE IS HIGHLY CONFIDENTIAL, AS YOU KNOW, BUT I MANAGED TO GET A LOOK AT IT, KNOWING THAT YOU WEREN'T JUST ANYBODY, SHELTON. YOU'RE THE OPPORTUNITY I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR, FOR YEARS...
I COULD ROUGH YOU UP UNTIL YOU TALK, BUT YOUR FILE ALSO SAYS THAT YOU'RE A REAL TOUGHIE. SO THAT I DON'T HAVE TO HURT MY HANDS NEEDLESSLY, I'D RATHER GET STRAIGHT TO THE POINT...
YOU HAVE EXACTLY FIVE SECONDS TO REMEMBER WHERE YOU HID THE MONEY!
LISTEN, LIEUTENANT, I...
FIVE SECONDS, SHELTON! I WIN EITHER WAY: THE MONEY OR... A MEDAL! ONE... TWO... THREE...
...FOUR... F...
STOP!
YOU WIN: THE MONEY'S IN A SAFE AT NATIONAL TRUST.
WELL! SEE HOW EVERYTHING BECOMES MUCH EASIER WITH JUST A BIT OF GOODWILL? NATIONAL TRUST, YOU SAY...

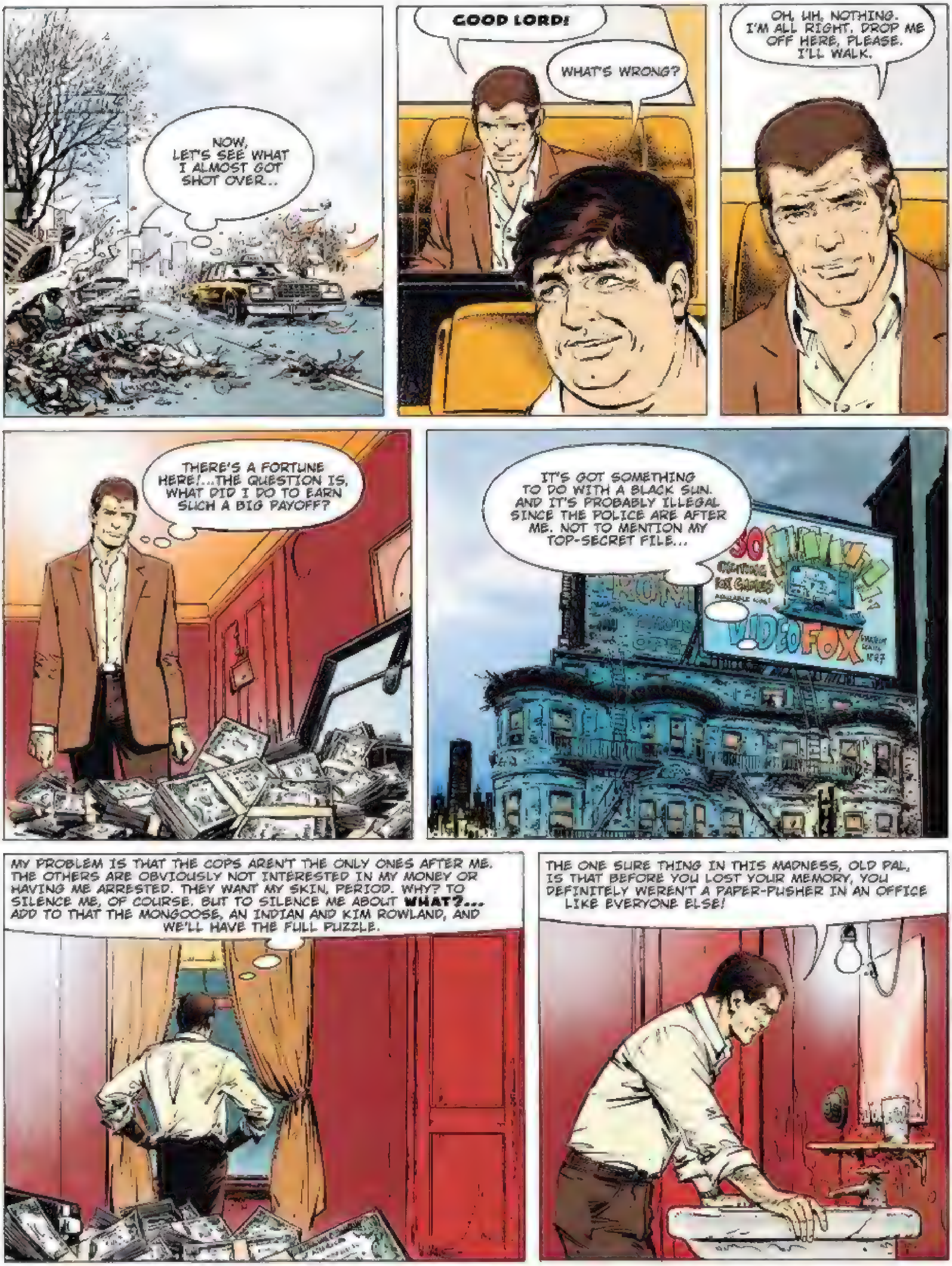

TRUST
REMEMBER, IF I HAVE TO SHOOT, IT WILL HAVE BEEN IN THE LINE OF DUTY.
BETTER TAKE YOUR HAND OUT OF YOUR POCKET, LIEUTENANT. YOU LOOK LIKE A BAD COP IN A B MOVIE.
MR. SHELTON...
DELIGHTED TO SEE YOU AGAIN, MR. SHELTON. I TAKE IT YOU CAME FOR THE SAFETY DEPOSIT BOX?
ERR... YES, OF COURSE. HOW DID YOU RECOGNISE ME?
I CONSIDER IT A DUTY NEVER TO FORGET A CUSTOMER. EVEN IF I SAW HIM ONLY ONCE, LIKE YOU. ARE THESE GENTLEMEN WITH YOU?
IF YOU DON'T MIND...
NOT AT ALL. PLEASE FOLLOW ME. I'LL HAVE THE SAFE OPENED.
WHAT'S YOUR BOX NUMBER AGAIN, MR. SHELTON?
?!

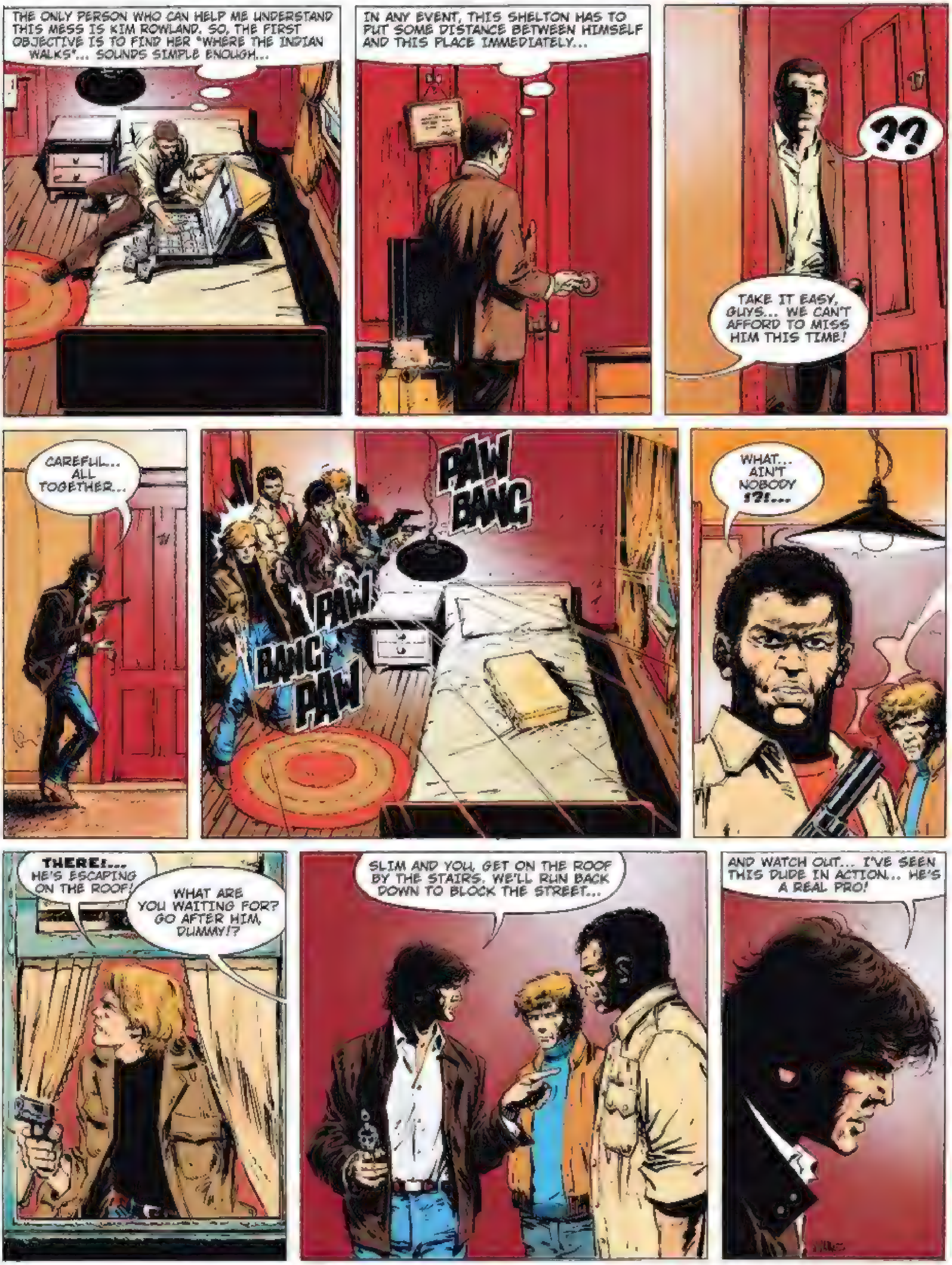

ERR... 608.
608. LET'S SEE...
607
608
609
THERE WE GO, MR. SHELTON. ALL YOU NEED TO OPEN IT IS YOUR KEY.
CALL ME WHEN YOU'RE THROUGH. I'LL BE WITH THE GUARD.
THANK YOU.
NTB
606
607
I TAKE IT THIS IS WHAT YOU WANT...
YOU OPEN IT, SON. A GUY LIKE YOU IS QUITE CAPABLE OF HAVING BOOBY-TRAPPED THE LOCK.
AS YOU WISH, LIEUTENANT.
STOP! I CHANGED MY MIND!
MOVE OVER, BACK TO THE WALL, SHELTON. I THINK YOU'RE GOING ALONG WITH THIS A BIT TOO EASILY. THAT'S NOT LIKE YOU...
NOW, NOW... DON'T YOU TRUST ME?...
THAT'S WHY I'M STILL ALIVE, SON. I'D BET MY SOCKS THAT YOU'VE CONCEALED A GUN IN HERE. IT'S SUCH A CLASSIC MOVE THAT...
AAAAAH!
VLOUFF

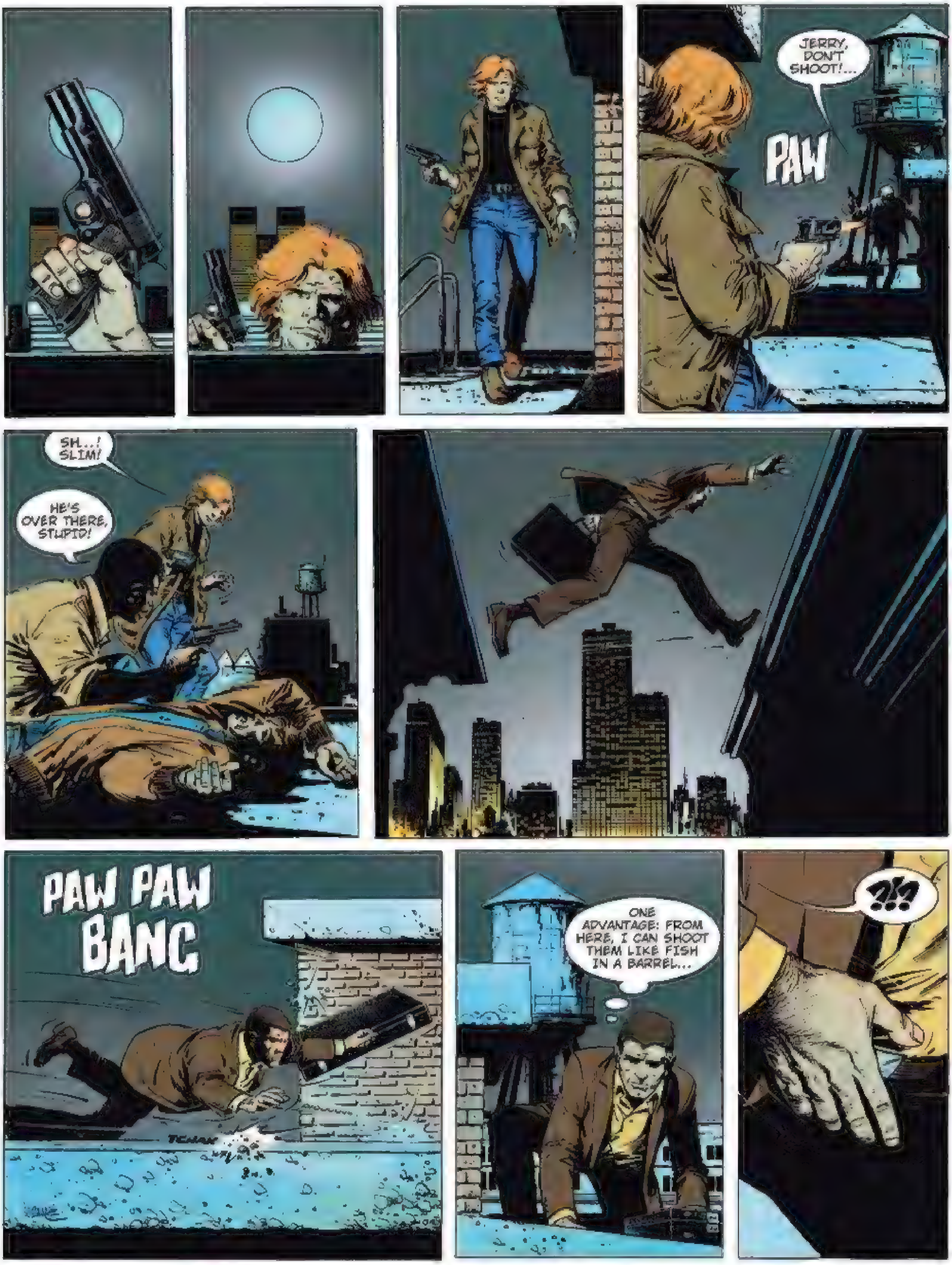

WAAAAAA... MY EYES!
YOU SON OF A...
PANG
AAAH!
BUT... MR. SHELTON!... WHAT'S GOING ON!?...
A LITTLE BIT OF ACTION IN BOTH OUR LIVES, PAL! THANKS AGAIN FOR THE WELCOME...
WWIUUUUUUUUU

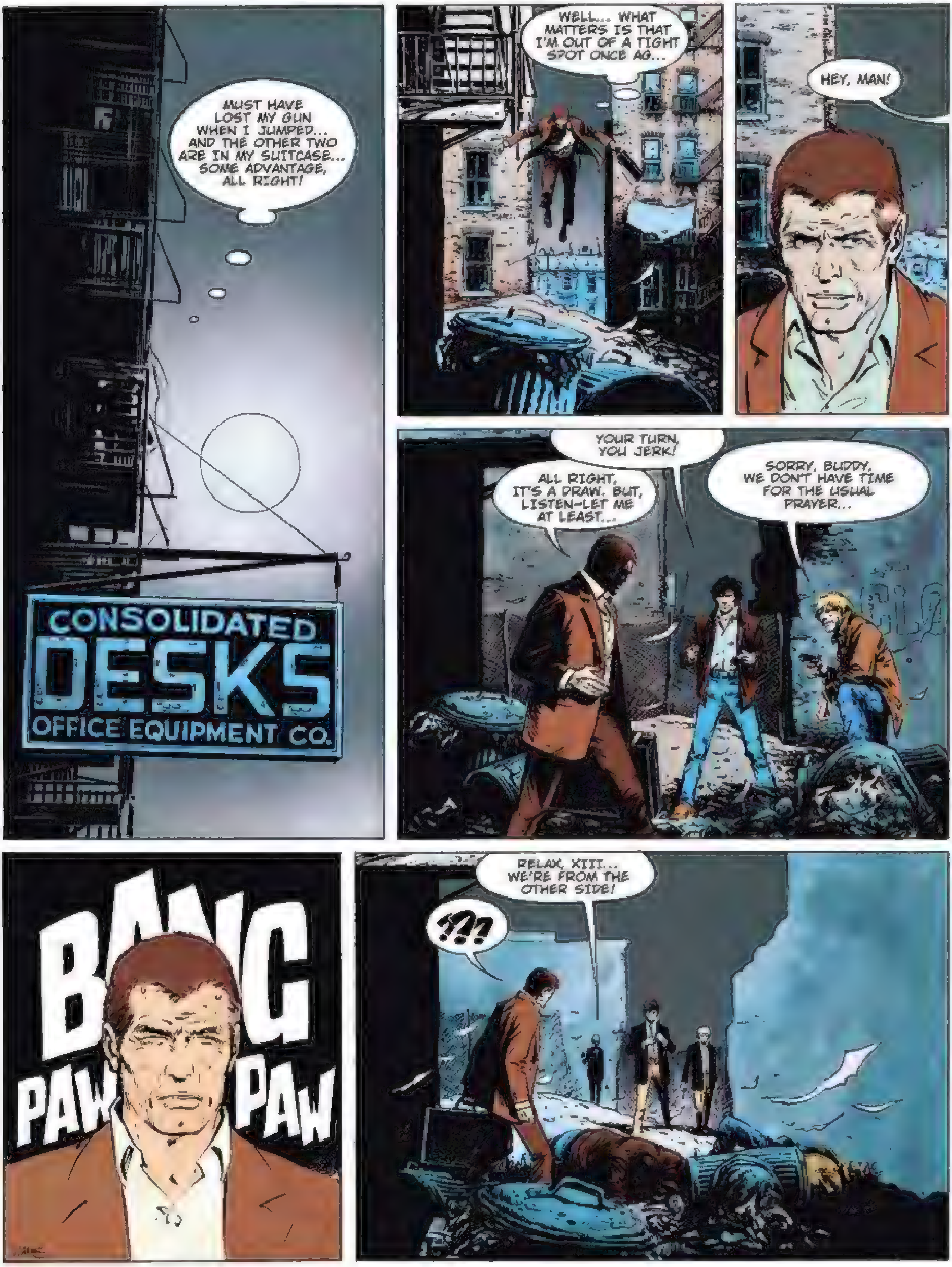

STOP! HOLD IT!
HOLY...! THE ALARM LOCKED THE DOOR!
GIVE UP! YOU DON'T STAND A CHANCE!
OUCH!
THERE'S ALWAYS A CHANCE, BUDDY... SORRY!
THE STAFF RESTROOMS, QUICK?...
SOMETIMES YOU HAVE TO GO AT THE WORST TIME, DON'T YOU?
SECOND DOOR ON THE RIGHT, DOWN THE CORRIDOR THERE...
THANKS.

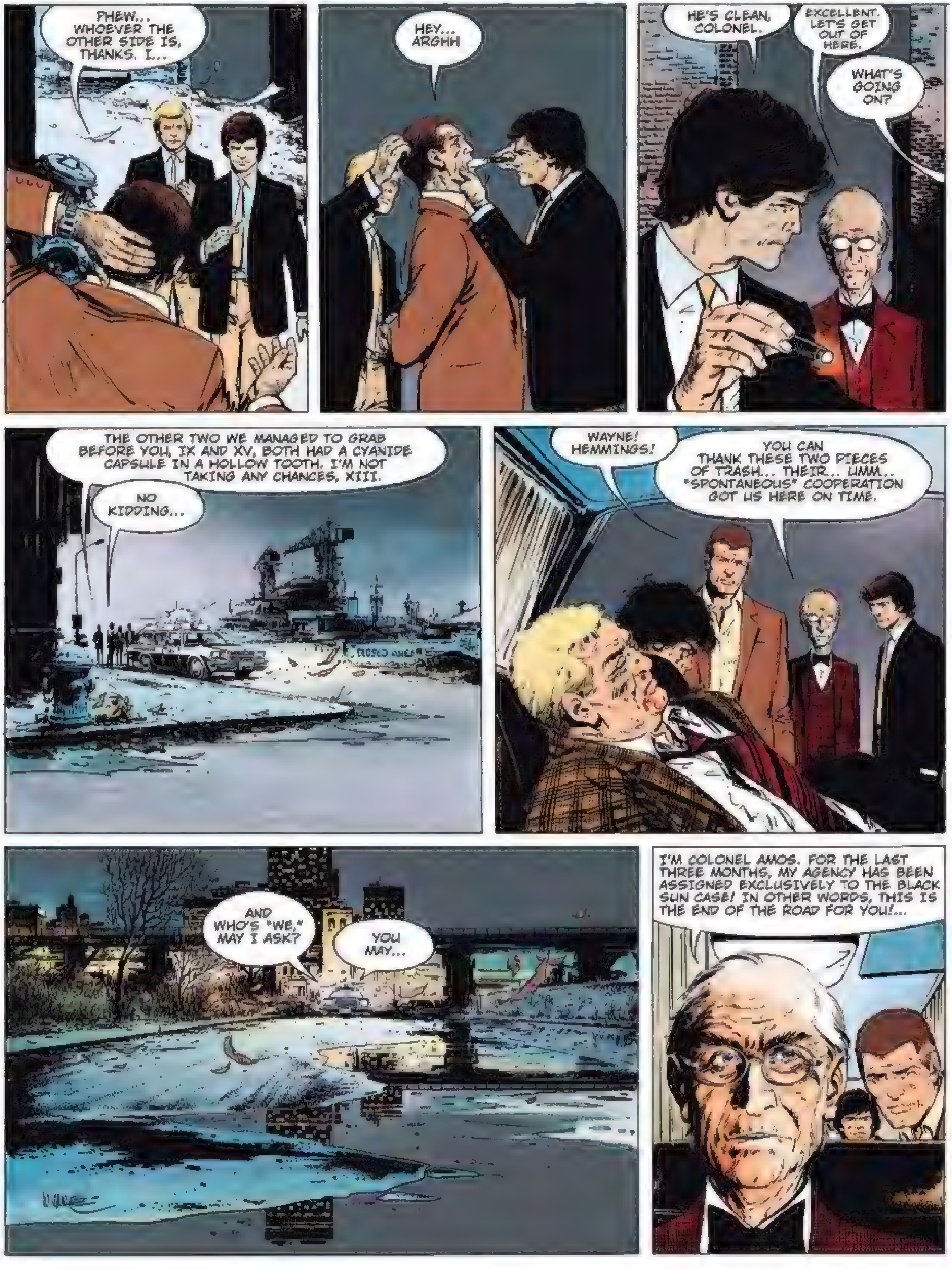

W
UUUUUiii
ALL BANKS HAVE A SOFT SPOT... HOPE THIS ONE IS NO EXCEPTION...
BINGO!
WHAT'S ALL THE NOISE ABOUT?... ANOTHER HOLDUP?
NO. MARTIANS HAVE INVADED THE CITY.
MARTIANS! WHAT!?...
BUT DON'T WORRY; THE MARINES ARE ON THE WAY...
PHEW!
TAXI!
PHEWWW... WHAT A CIRCUS! FEELS LIKE I'VE BEEN DOING THIS MY WHOLE LIFE, THOUGH.

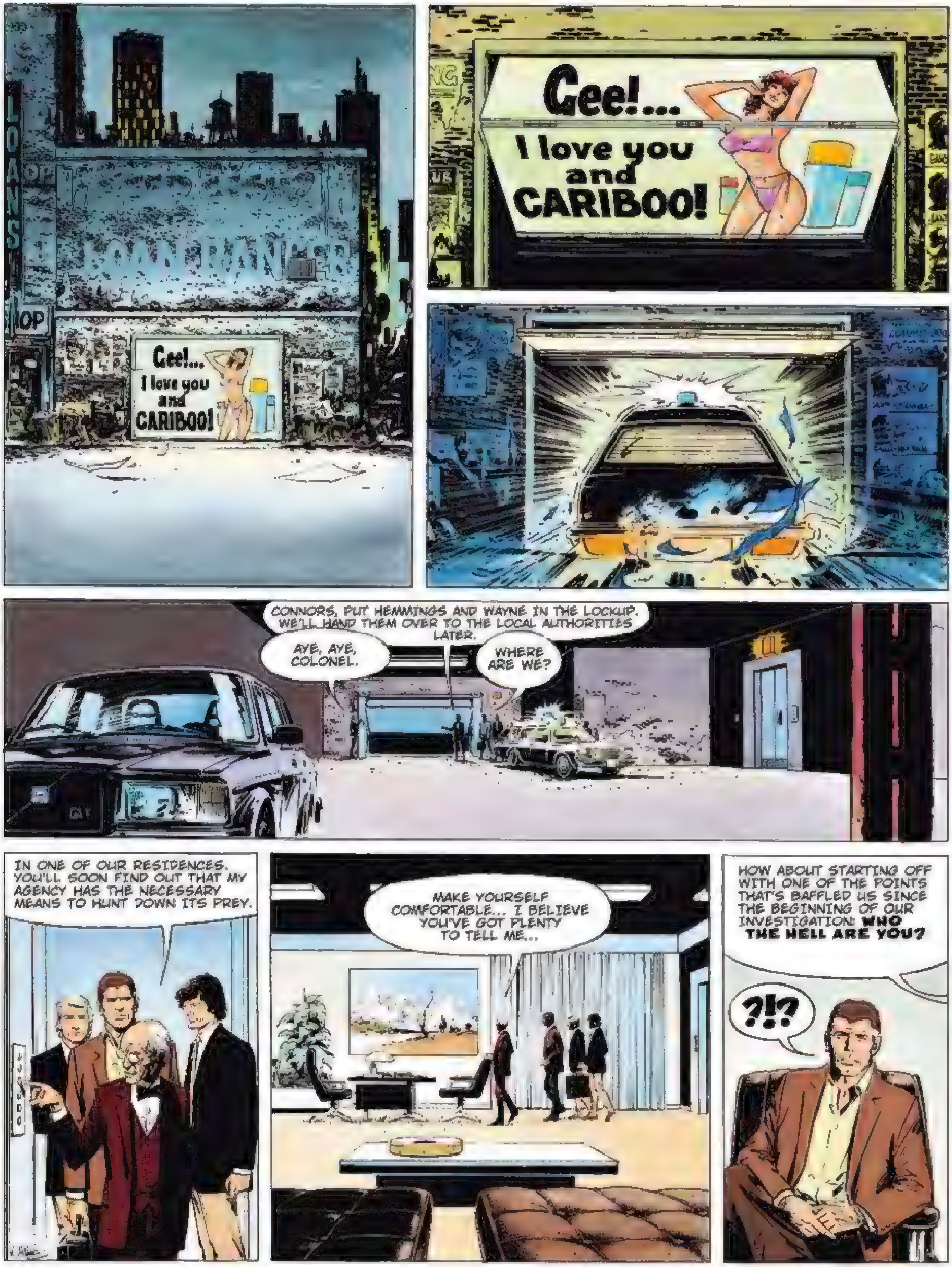

NOW, LET'S SEE WHAT I ALMOST GOT SHOT OVER...
GOOD LORD!
WHAT'S WRONG?
OH, UH, NOTHING. I'M ALL RIGHT. DROP ME OFF HERE, PLEASE. I'LL WALK.
THERE'S A FORTUNE HERE!...THE QUESTION IS, WHAT DID I DO TO EARN SUCH A BIG PAYOFF?
IT'S GOT SOMETHING TO DO WITH A BLACK SUN. AND IT'S PROBABLY ILLEGAL SINCE THE POLICE ARE AFTER ME. NOT TO MENTION MY TOP-SECRET FILE...
VIDEO FOX
MY PROBLEM IS THAT THE COPS AREN'T THE ONLY ONES AFTER ME. THE OTHERS ARE OBVIOUSLY NOT INTERESTED IN MY MONEY OR HAVING ME ARRESTED. THEY WANT MY SKIN, PERIOD. WHY? TO SILENCE ME, OF COURSE. BUT TO SILENCE ME ABOUT **WHAT?...** ADD TO THAT THE MONGOOSE, AN INDIAN AND KIM ROWLAND, AND WE'LL HAVE THE FULL PUZZLE.
THE ONE SURE THING IN THIS MADNESS, OLD PAL, IS THAT BEFORE YOU LOST YOUR MEMORY, YOU DEFINITELY WEREN'T A PAPER-PUSHER IN AN OFFICE LIKE EVERYONE ELSE!

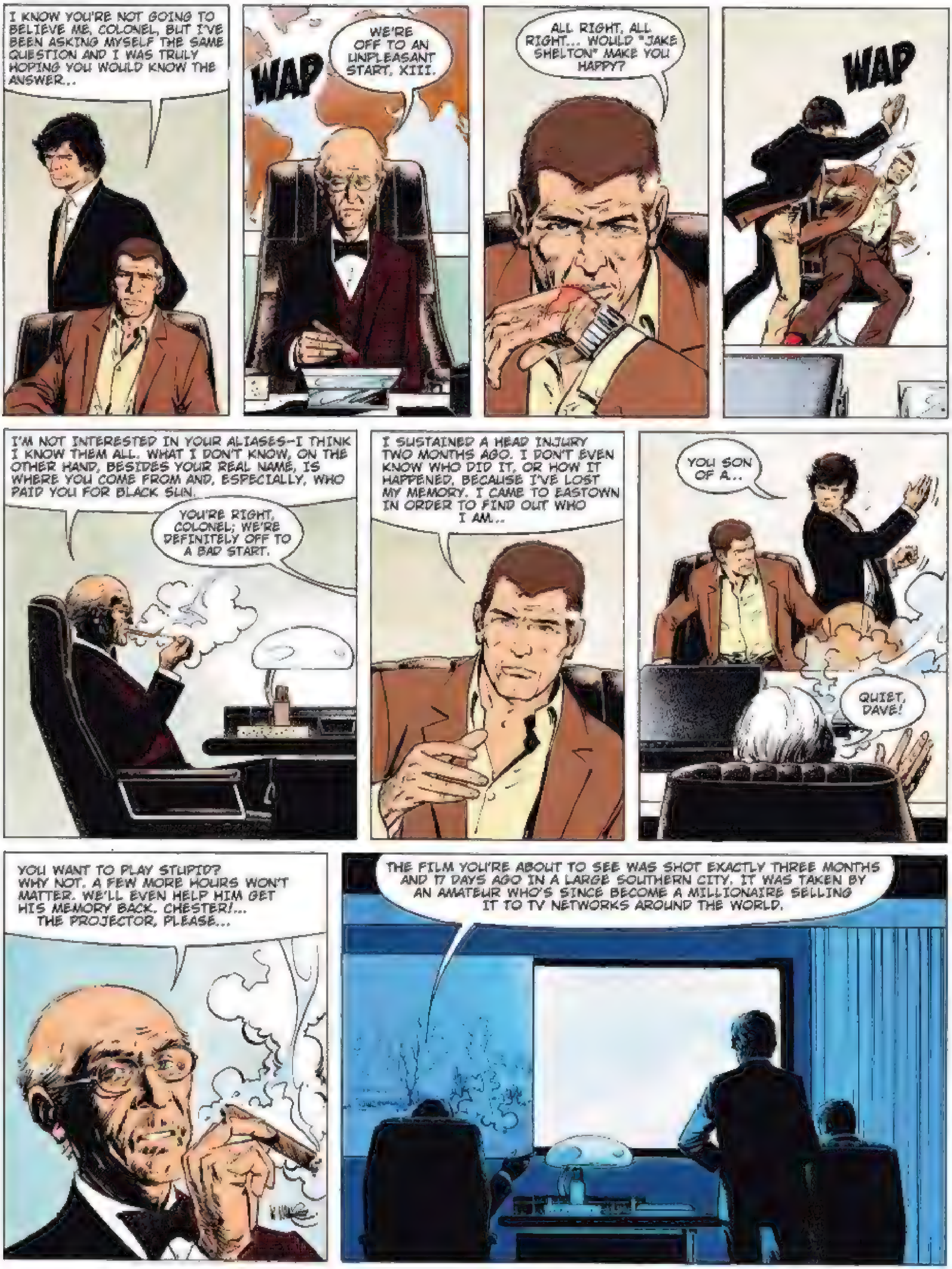

THE ONLY PERSON WHO CAN HELP ME UNDERSTAND THIS MESS IS KIM ROWLAND. SO, THE FIRST OBJECTIVE IS TO FIND HER "WHERE THE INDIAN WALKS"... SOUNDS SIMPLE ENOUGH...
IN ANY EVENT, THIS SHELTON HAS TO PUT SOME DISTANCE BETWEEN HIMSELF AND THIS PLACE IMMEDIATELY...
??
TAKE IT EASY, GUYS... WE CAN'T AFFORD TO MISS HIM THIS TIME!
CAREFUL... ALL TOGETHER...
PAW
BANG
PAW
BANG
PAW
WHAT... AIN'T NOBODY ?!...
THERE!... HE'S ESCAPING ON THE ROOF!
WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR? GO AFTER HIM, DUMMY!?
SLIM AND YOU, GET ON THE ROOF BY THE STAIRS. WE'LL RUN BACK DOWN TO BLOCK THE STREET...
AND WATCH OUT... I'VE SEEN THIS DUDE IN ACTION... HE'S A REAL PRO!

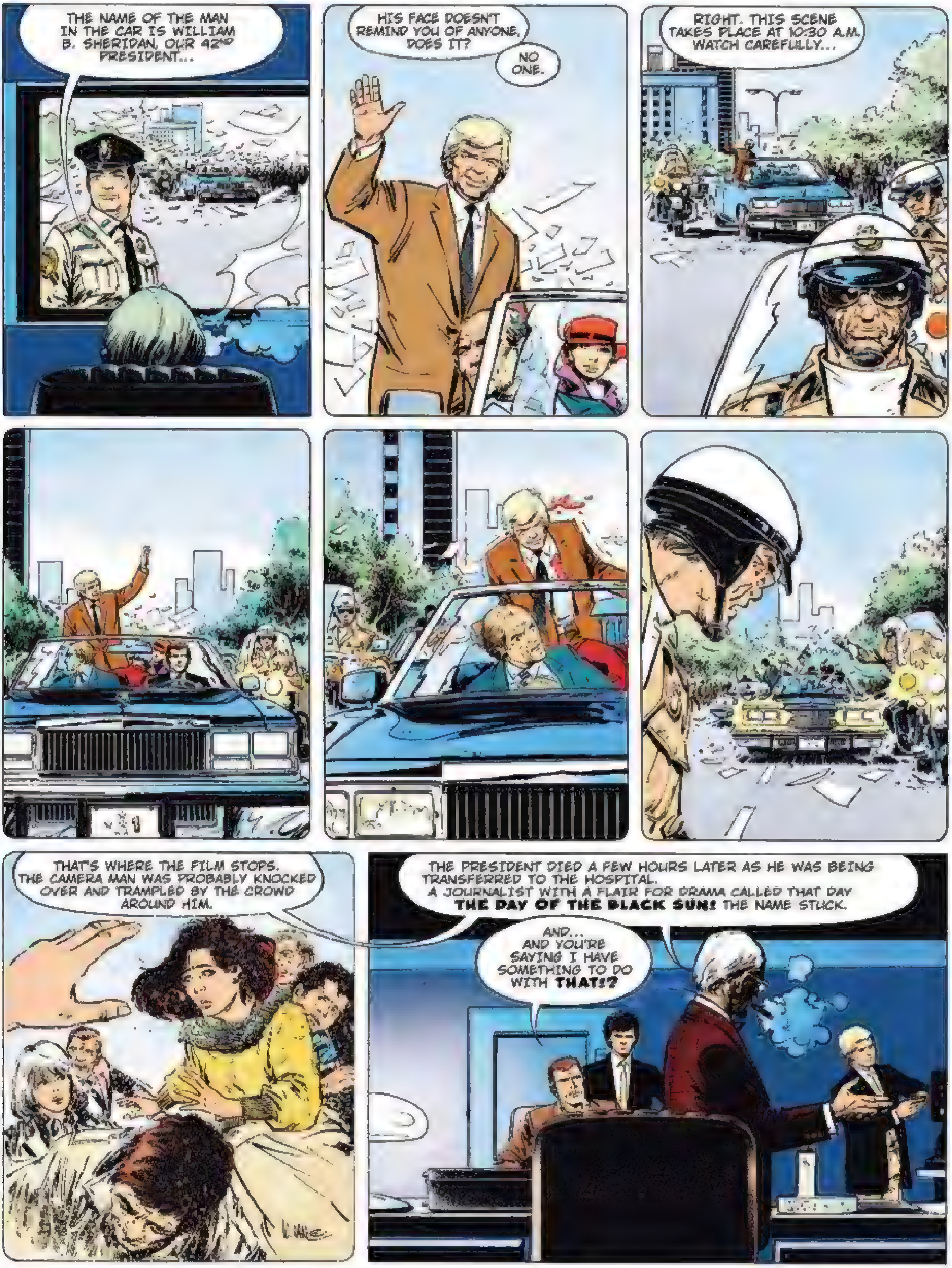

JERRY, DON'T SHOOT!...
PAW
SH...! SLIM!
HE'S OVER THERE, STUPID!
PAW PAW BANG
TCHAK
ONE ADVANTAGE: FROM HERE, I CAN SHOOT THEM LIKE FISH IN A BARREL...
?!?

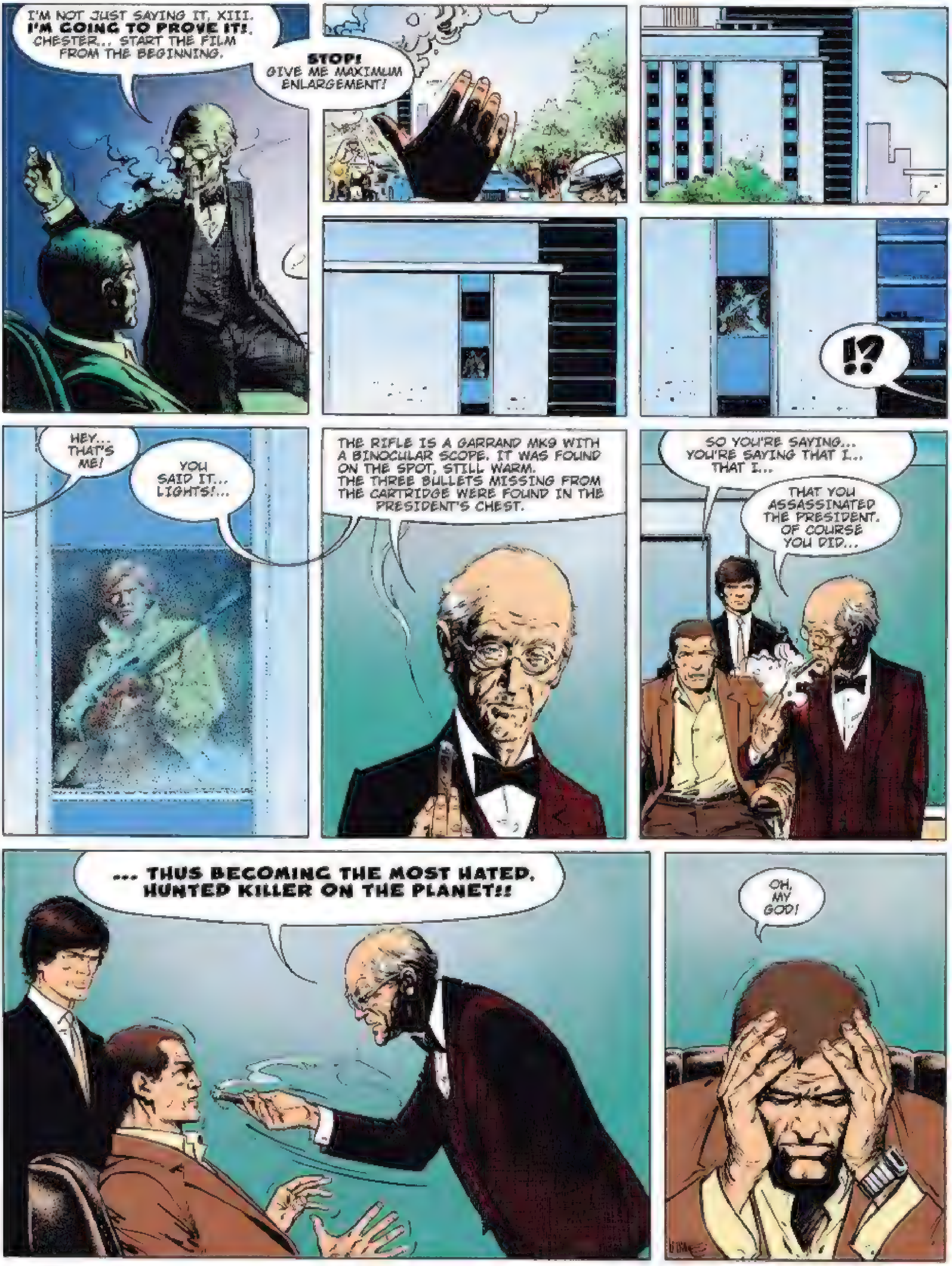

MUST HAVE LOST MY GUN WHEN I JUMPED... AND THE OTHER TWO ARE IN MY SUITCASE... SOME ADVANTAGE, ALL RIGHT!
CONSOLIDATED DESKS OFFICE EQUIPMENT CO.
WELL... WHAT MATTERS IS THAT I'M OUT OF A TIGHT SPOT ONCE AG...
HEY, MAN!
ALL RIGHT, IT'S A DRAW. BUT, LISTEN–LET ME AT LEAST...
YOUR TURN, YOU JERK!
SORRY, BUDDY, WE DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THE USUAL PRAYER...
BANG
PAW
PAW
RELAX, XIII... WE'RE FROM THE OTHER SIDE!
?!?

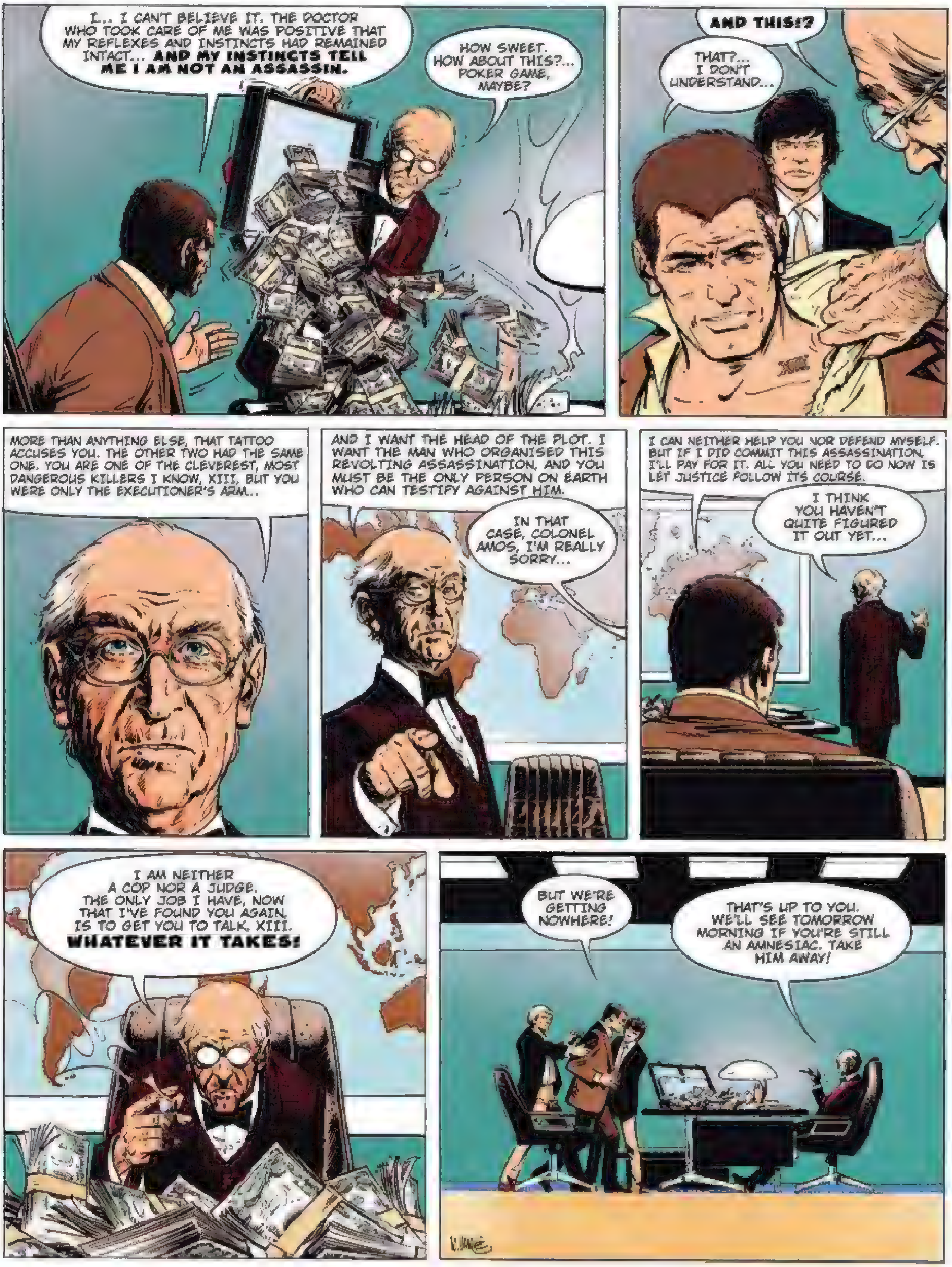

PHEW... WHOEVER THE OTHER SIDE IS, THANKS. I...
HEY... ARGHH
HE'S CLEAN, COLONEL.
EXCELLENT. LET'S GET OUT OF HERE.
WHAT'S GOING ON?
THE OTHER TWO WE MANAGED TO GRAB BEFORE YOU, IX AND XV, BOTH HAD A CYANIDE CAPSULE IN A HOLLOW TOOTH. I'M NOT TAKING ANY CHANCES, XIII.
NO KIDDING...
CLOSED AREA
WAYNE! HEMMINGS!
YOU CAN THANK THESE TWO PIECES OF TRASH... THEIR... UMM... "SPONTANEOUS" COOPERATION GOT US HERE ON TIME.
AND WHO'S "WE," MAY I ASK?
YOU MAY...
I'M COLONEL AMOS. FOR THE LAST THREE MONTHS, MY AGENCY HAS BEEN ASSIGNED EXCLUSIVELY TO THE BLACK SUN CASE! IN OTHER WORDS, THIS IS THE END OF THE ROAD FOR YOU!...

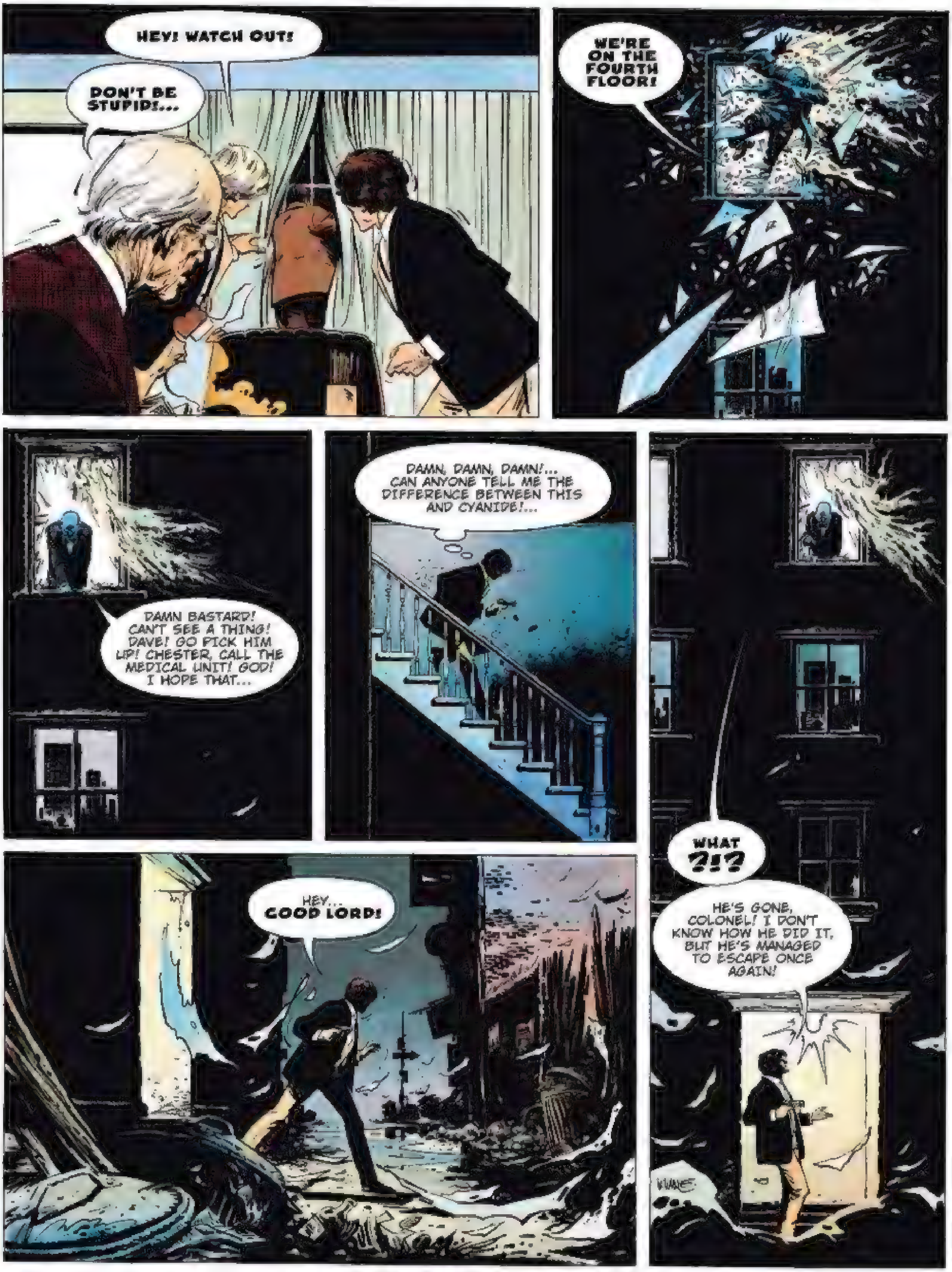

LOANS
Gee!... I love you and CARIBOO!
Gee!... I love you and CARIBOO!
CONNORS, PUT HEMMINGS AND WAYNE IN THE LOCKUP. WE'LL HAND THEM OVER TO THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES LATER.
AYE, AYE, COLONEL.
WHERE ARE WE?
IN ONE OF OUR RESIDENCES. YOU'LL SOON FIND OUT THAT MY AGENCY HAS THE NECESSARY MEANS TO HUNT DOWN ITS PREY.
MAKE YOURSELF COMFORTABLE... I BELIEVE YOU'VE GOT PLENTY TO TELL ME...
HOW ABOUT STARTING OFF WITH ONE OF THE POINTS THAT'S BAFFLED US SINCE THE BEGINNING OF OUR INVESTIGATION: WHO THE HELL ARE YOU?
?!?

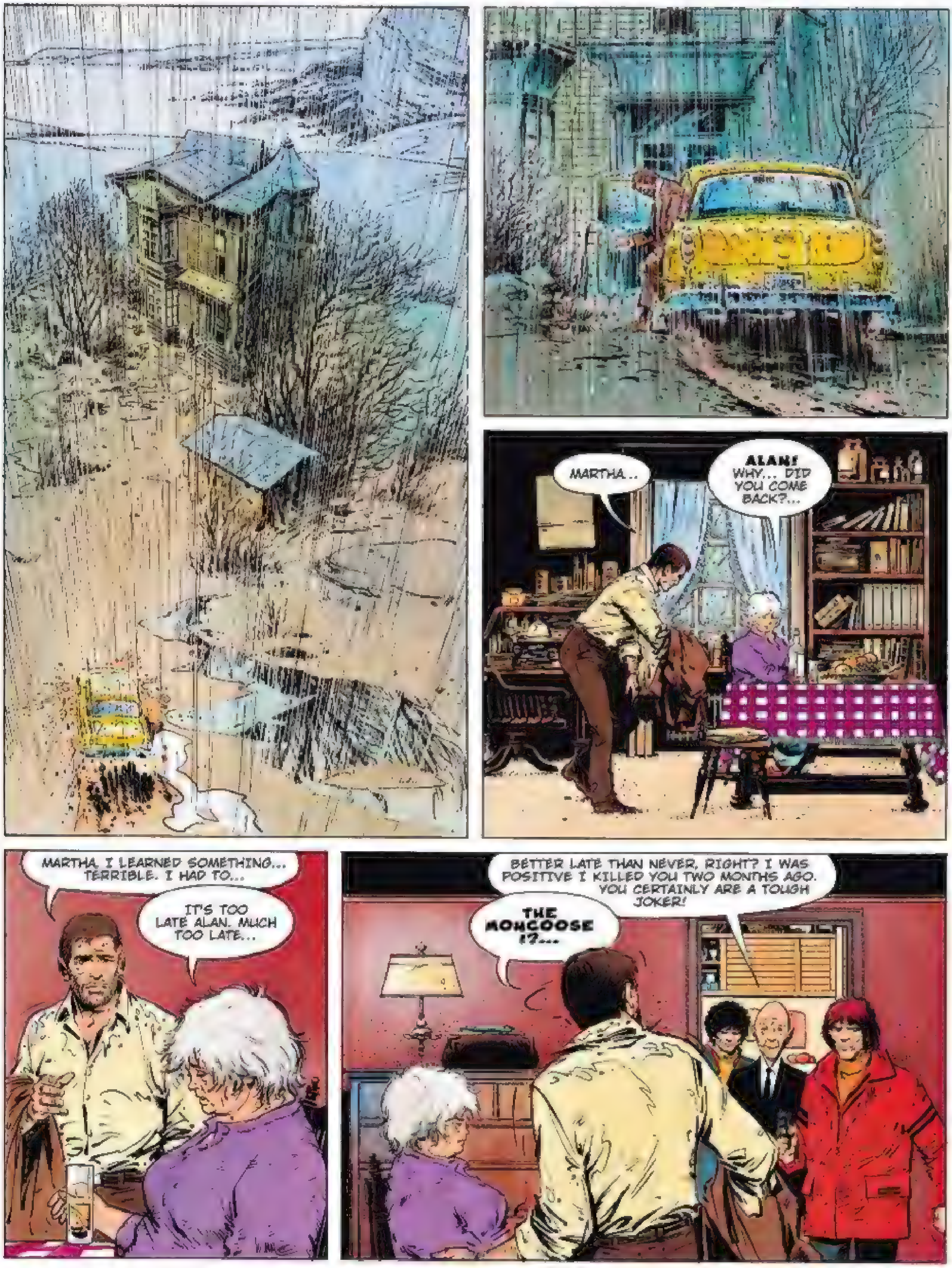

I KNOW YOU'RE NOT GOING TO BELIEVE ME, COLONEL, BUT I'VE BEEN ASKING MYSELF THE SAME QUESTION AND I WAS TRULY HOPING YOU WOULD KNOW THE ANSWER...
WAP
WE'RE OFF TO AN UNPLEASANT START, XIII.
ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT... WOULD "JAKE SHELTON" MAKE YOU HAPPY?
WAP
I'M NOT INTERESTED IN YOUR ALIASES–I THINK I KNOW THEM ALL. WHAT I DON'T KNOW, ON THE OTHER HAND, BESIDES YOUR REAL NAME, IS WHERE YOU COME FROM AND, ESPECIALLY, WHO PAID YOU FOR BLACK SUN.
YOU'RE RIGHT, COLONEL; WE'RE DEFINITELY OFF TO A BAD START.
I SUSTAINED A HEAD INJURY TWO MONTHS AGO. I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHO DID IT, OR HOW IT HAPPENED, BECAUSE I'VE LOST MY MEMORY. I CAME TO EASTOWN IN ORDER TO FIND OUT WHO I AM...
YOU SON OF A...
QUIET, DAVE!
YOU WANT TO PLAY STUPID? WHY NOT. A FEW MORE HOURS WON'T MATTER. WE'LL EVEN HELP HIM GET HIS MEMORY BACK. CHESTER!... THE PROJECTOR, PLEASE...
THE FILM YOU'RE ABOUT TO SEE WAS SHOT EXACTLY THREE MONTHS AND 17 DAYS AGO IN A LARGE SOUTHERN CITY. IT WAS TAKEN BY AN AMATEUR WHO'S SINCE BECOME A MILLIONAIRE SELLING IT TO TV NETWORKS AROUND THE WORLD.

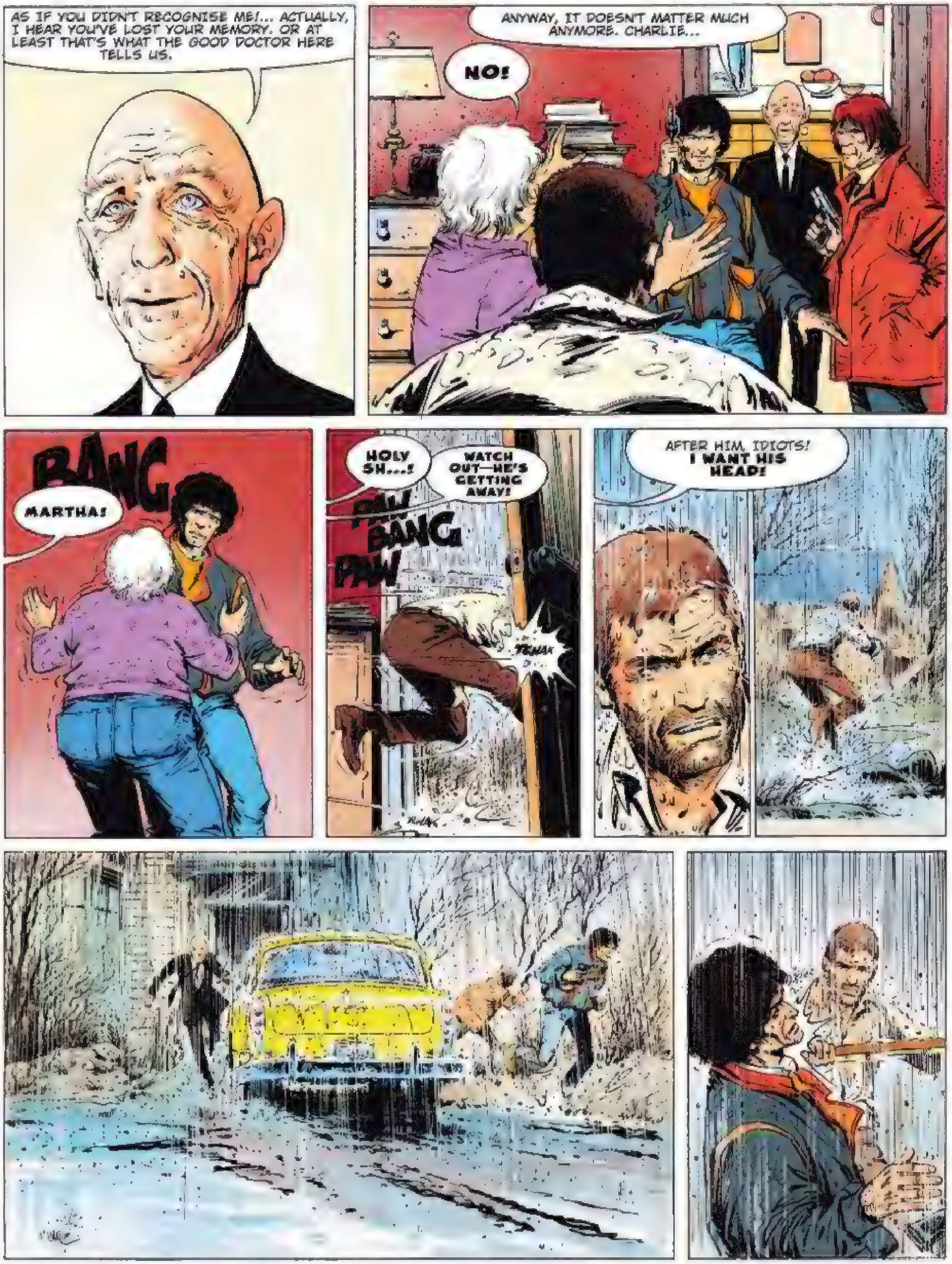

THE NAME OF THE MAN IN THE CAR IS WILLIAM B. SHERIDAN, OUR 42ND PRESIDENT...
HIS FACE DOESN'T REMIND YOU OF ANYONE, DOES IT?
NO ONE.
RIGHT. THIS SCENE TAKES PLACE AT 10:30 A.M. WATCH CAREFULLY...
THAT'S WHERE THE FILM STOPS. THE CAMERA MAN WAS PROBABLY KNOCKED OVER AND TRAMPLED BY THE CROWD AROUND HIM.
THE PRESIDENT DIED A FEW HOURS LATER AS HE WAS BEING TRANSFERRED TO THE HOSPITAL. A JOURNALIST WITH A FLAIR FOR DRAMA CALLED THAT DAY THE DAY OF THE BLACK SUN! THE NAME STUCK.
AND... AND YOU'RE SAYING I HAVE SOMETHING TO DO WITH THAT!?

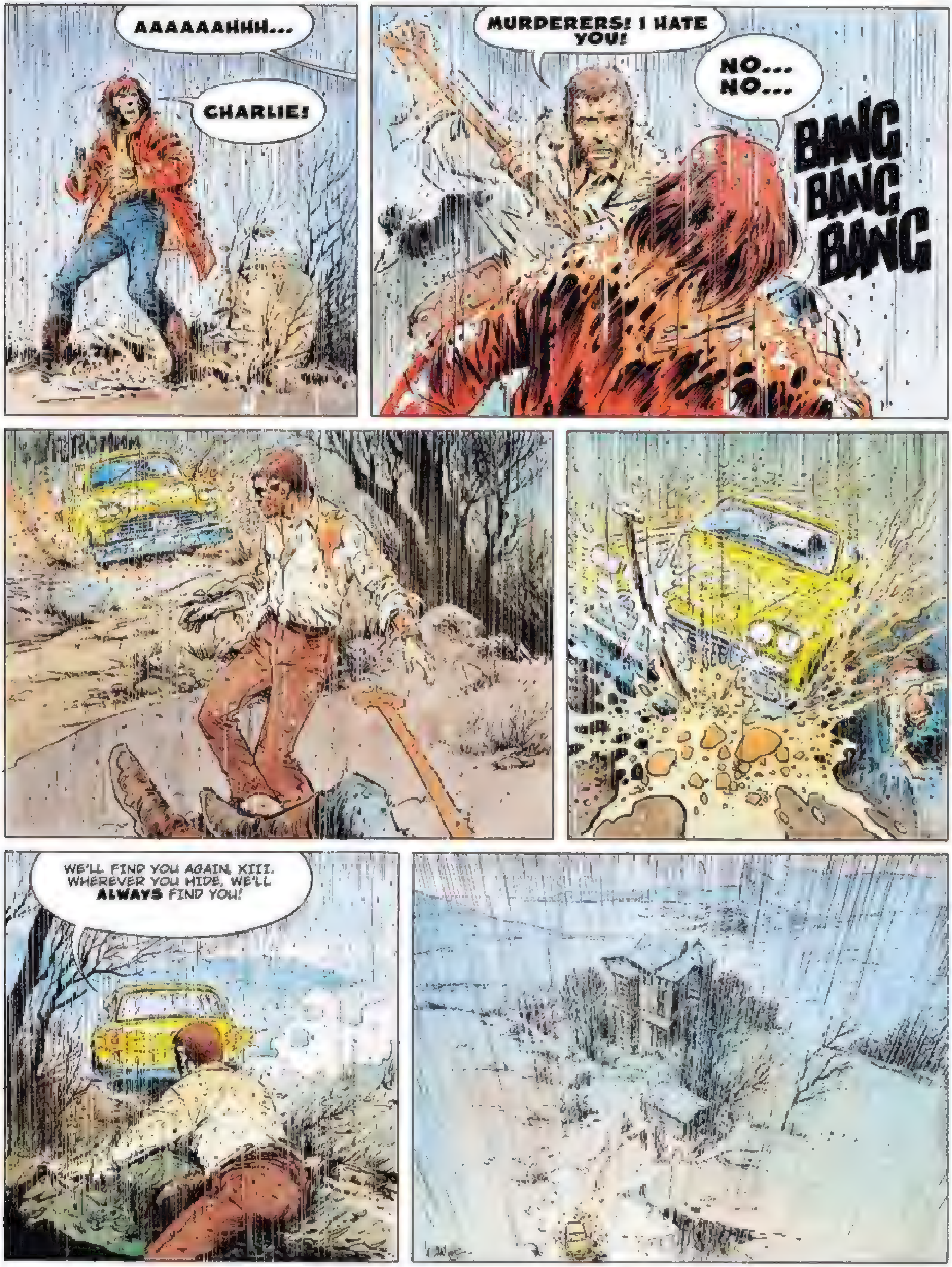

I'M NOT JUST SAYING IT, XIII. **I'M GOING TO PROVE IT!** CHESTER... START THE FILM FROM THE BEGINNING.
STOP! GIVE ME MAXIMUM ENLARGEMENT!
!?
HEY... THAT'S ME!
YOU SAID IT... LIGHTS!...
THE RIFLE IS A GARRAND MK9 WITH A BINOCULAR SCOPE. IT WAS FOUND ON THE SPOT, STILL WARM. THE THREE BULLETS MISSING FROM THE CARTRIDGE WERE FOUND IN THE PRESIDENT'S CHEST.
SO YOU'RE SAYING... YOU'RE SAYING THAT I... THAT I...
THAT YOU ASSASSINATED THE PRESIDENT. OF COURSE YOU DID...
... THUS BECOMING THE MOST HATED, HUNTED KILLER ON THE PLANET!!
OH, MY GOD!

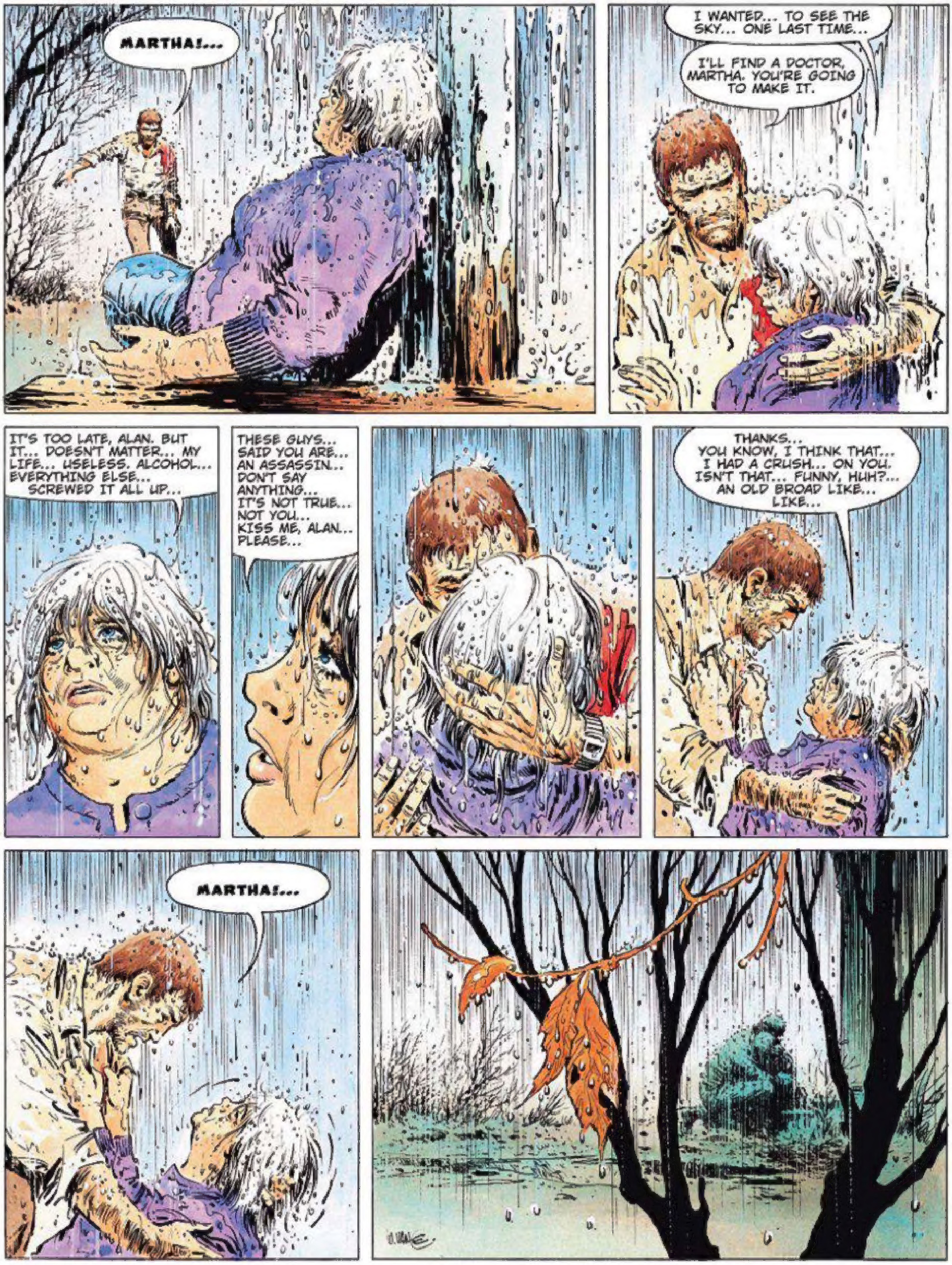

I... I CAN'T BELIEVE IT. THE DOCTOR WHO TOOK CARE OF ME WAS POSITIVE THAT MY REFLEXES AND INSTINCTS HAD REMAINED INTACT... **AND MY INSTINCTS TELL ME I AM NOT AN ASSASSIN.**
HOW SWEET. HOW ABOUT THIS?... POKER GAME, MAYBE?
AND THIS!?
THAT?... I DON'T UNDERSTAND...
MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE, THAT TATTOO ACCUSES YOU. THE OTHER TWO HAD THE SAME ONE. YOU ARE ONE OF THE CLEVEREST, MOST DANGEROUS KILLERS I KNOW, XIII, BUT YOU WERE ONLY THE EXECUTIONER'S ARM...
AND I WANT THE HEAD OF THE PLOT. I WANT THE MAN WHO ORGANISED THIS REVOLTING ASSASSINATION, AND YOU MUST BE THE ONLY PERSON ON EARTH WHO CAN TESTIFY AGAINST HIM.
IN THAT CASE, COLONEL AMOS, I'M REALLY SORRY...
I CAN NEITHER HELP YOU NOR DEFEND MYSELF. BUT IF I DID COMMIT THIS ASSASSINATION, I'LL PAY FOR IT. ALL YOU NEED TO DO NOW IS LET JUSTICE FOLLOW ITS COURSE.
I THINK YOU HAVEN'T QUITE FIGURED IT OUT YET...
I AM NEITHER A COP NOR A JUDGE. THE ONLY JOB I HAVE, NOW THAT I'VE FOUND YOU AGAIN, IS TO GET YOU TO TALK, XIII. **WHATEVER IT TAKES!**
BUT WE'RE GETTING NOWHERE!
THAT'S UP TO YOU. WE'LL SEE TOMORROW MORNING IF YOU'RE STILL AN AMNESIAC. TAKE HIM AWAY!

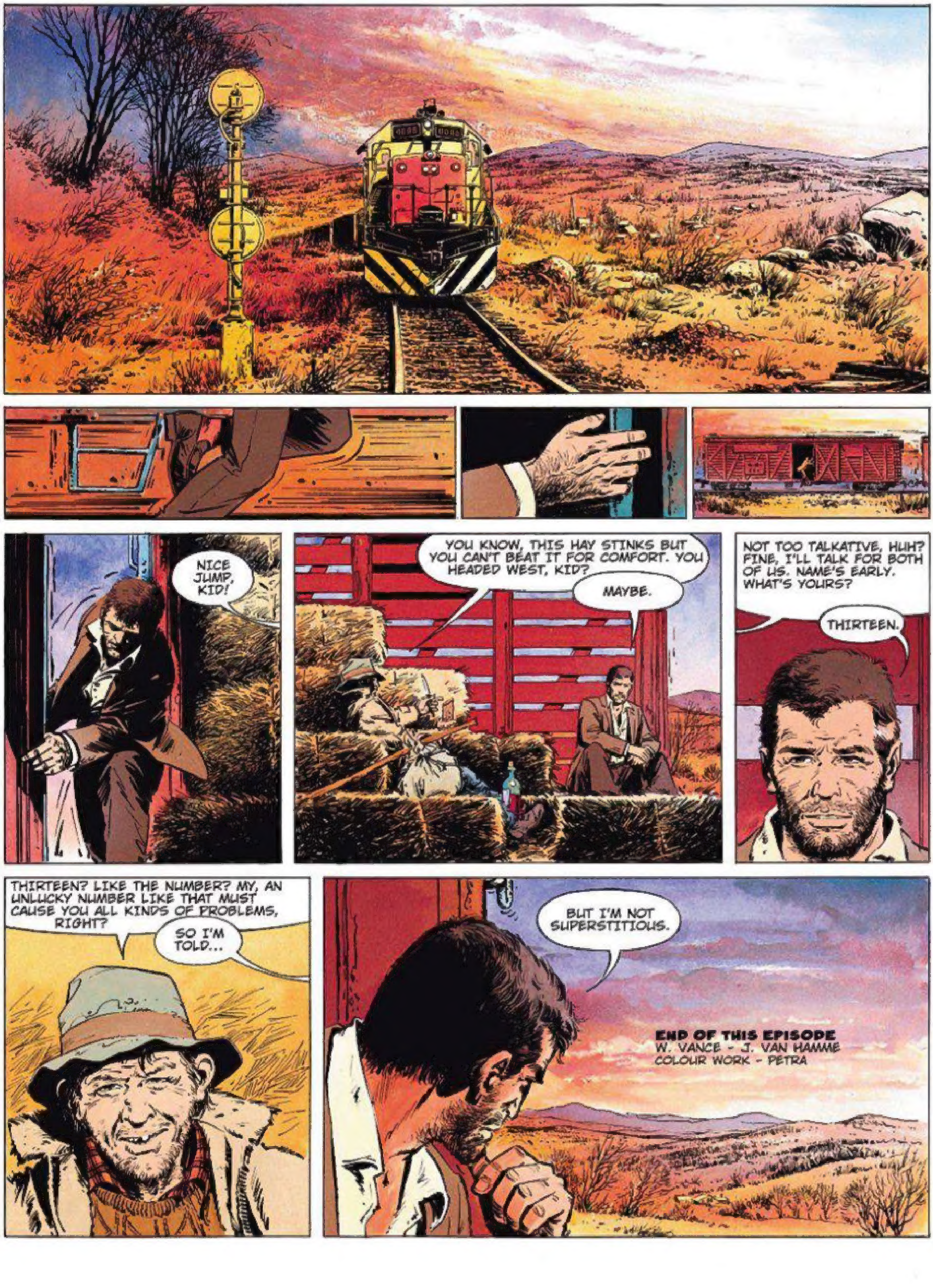

HEY! WATCH OUT!
DON'T BE STUPID!...
WE'RE ON THE FOURTH FLOOR!
DAMN BASTARD! CAN'T SEE A THING! DAVE! GO PICK HIM UP! CHESTER, CALL THE MEDICAL UNIT! GOD! I HOPE THAT...
DAMN, DAMN, DAMN!... CAN ANYONE TELL ME THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THIS AND CYANIDE!...
WHAT ?!?
HE'S GONE, COLONEL! I DON'T KNOW HOW HE DID IT, BUT HE'S MANAGED TO ESCAPE ONCE AGAIN!
HEY... GOOD LORD!


MARTHA...
ALAN! WHY... DID YOU COME BACK?...
MARTHA, I LEARNED SOMETHING... TERRIBLE. I HAD TO...
IT'S TOO LATE ALAN. MUCH TOO LATE...
BETTER LATE THAN NEVER, RIGHT? I WAS POSITIVE I KILLED YOU TWO MONTHS AGO. YOU CERTAINLY ARE A TOUGH JOKER!
THE MONGOOSE !?...


AS IF YOU DIDN'T RECOGNISE ME!... ACTUALLY, I HEAR YOU'VE LOST YOUR MEMORY. OR AT LEAST THAT'S WHAT THE GOOD DOCTOR HERE TELLS US.
ANYWAY, IT DOESN'T MATTER MUCH ANYMORE. CHARLIE...
NO!
BANG
MARTHA!
HOLY SH...!
WATCH OUT—HE'S GETTING AWAY!
PAW
BANG
PAW
TCHAK
RHAK
AFTER HIM, IDIOTS! **I WANT HIS HEAD!**


AAAAAAHHH...
CHARLIE!
MURDERERS! I HATE YOU!
NO... NO...
BANG BANG BANG
VRROOMM
WE'LL FIND YOU AGAIN, XIII. WHEREVER YOU HIDE, WE'LL **ALWAYS** FIND YOU!


MARTHA!...
I WANTED... TO SEE THE SKY... ONE LAST TIME...
I'LL FIND A DOCTOR, MARTHA. YOU'RE GOING TO MAKE IT.
IT'S TOO LATE, ALAN. BUT IT... DOESN'T MATTER... MY LIFE... USELESS. ALCOHOL... EVERYTHING ELSE... SCREWED IT ALL UP...
THESE GUYS... SAID YOU ARE... AN ASSASSIN... DON'T SAY ANYTHING... IT'S NOT TRUE... NOT YOU... KISS ME, ALAN... PLEASE...
THANKS... YOU KNOW, I THINK THAT... I HAD A CRUSH... ON YOU. ISN'T THAT... FUNNY, HUH?... AN OLD BROAD LIKE... LIKE...
MARTHA!...


NICE JUMP, KID!
YOU KNOW, THIS HAY STINKS BUT YOU CAN'T BEAT IT FOR COMFORT. YOU HEADED WEST, KID?
MAYBE.
NOT TOO TALKATIVE, HUH? FINE, I'LL TALK FOR BOTH OF US. NAME'S EARLY. WHAT'S YOURS?
THIRTEEN.
THIRTEEN? LIKE THE NUMBER? MY, AN UNLUCKY NUMBER LIKE THAT MUST CAUSE YOU ALL KINDS OF PROBLEMS, RIGHT?
SO I'M TOLD...
BUT I'M NOT SUPERSTITIOUS.
END OF THIS EPISODE
W. VANCE - J. VAN HAMME
COLOUR WORK - PETRA

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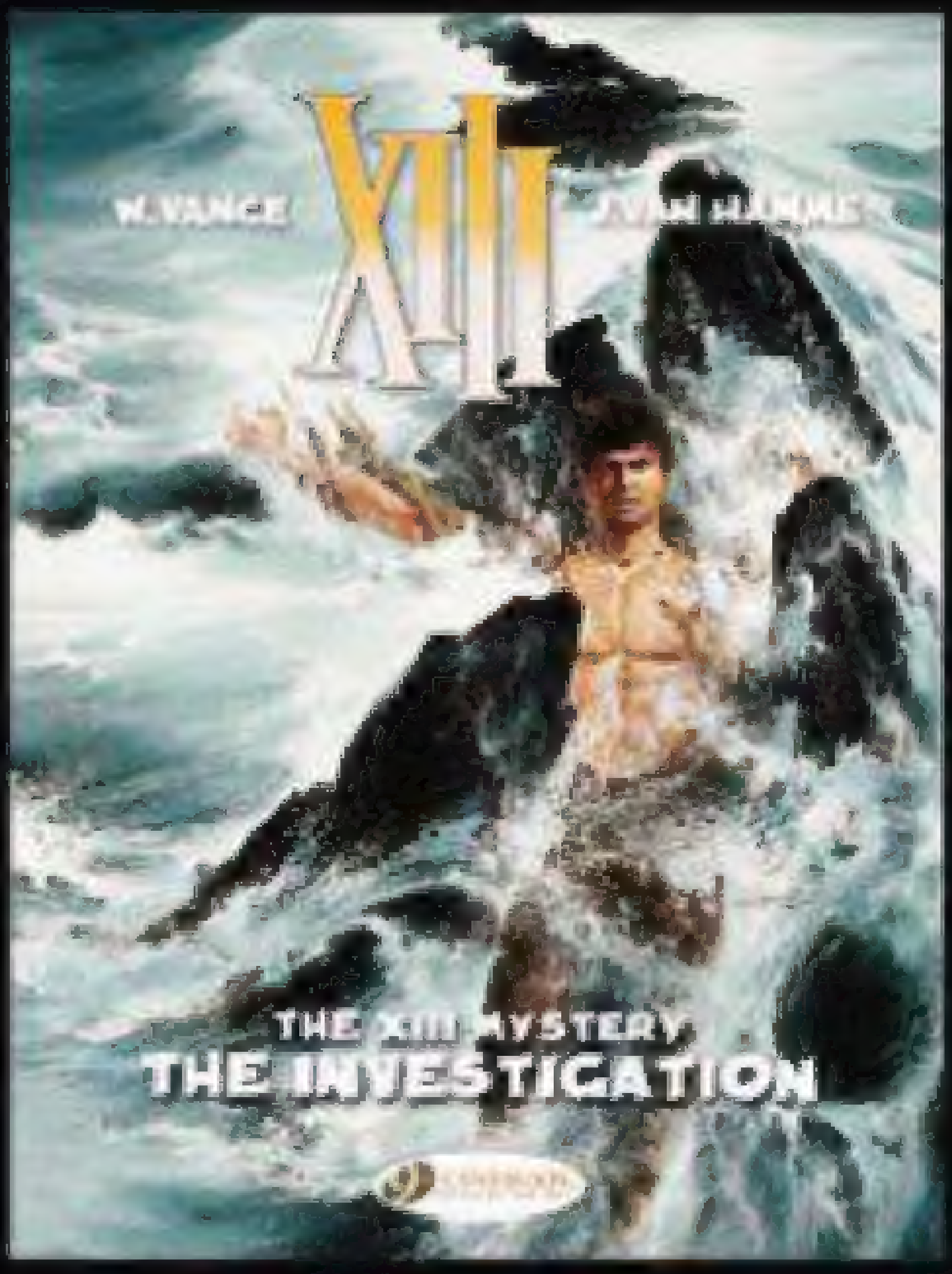
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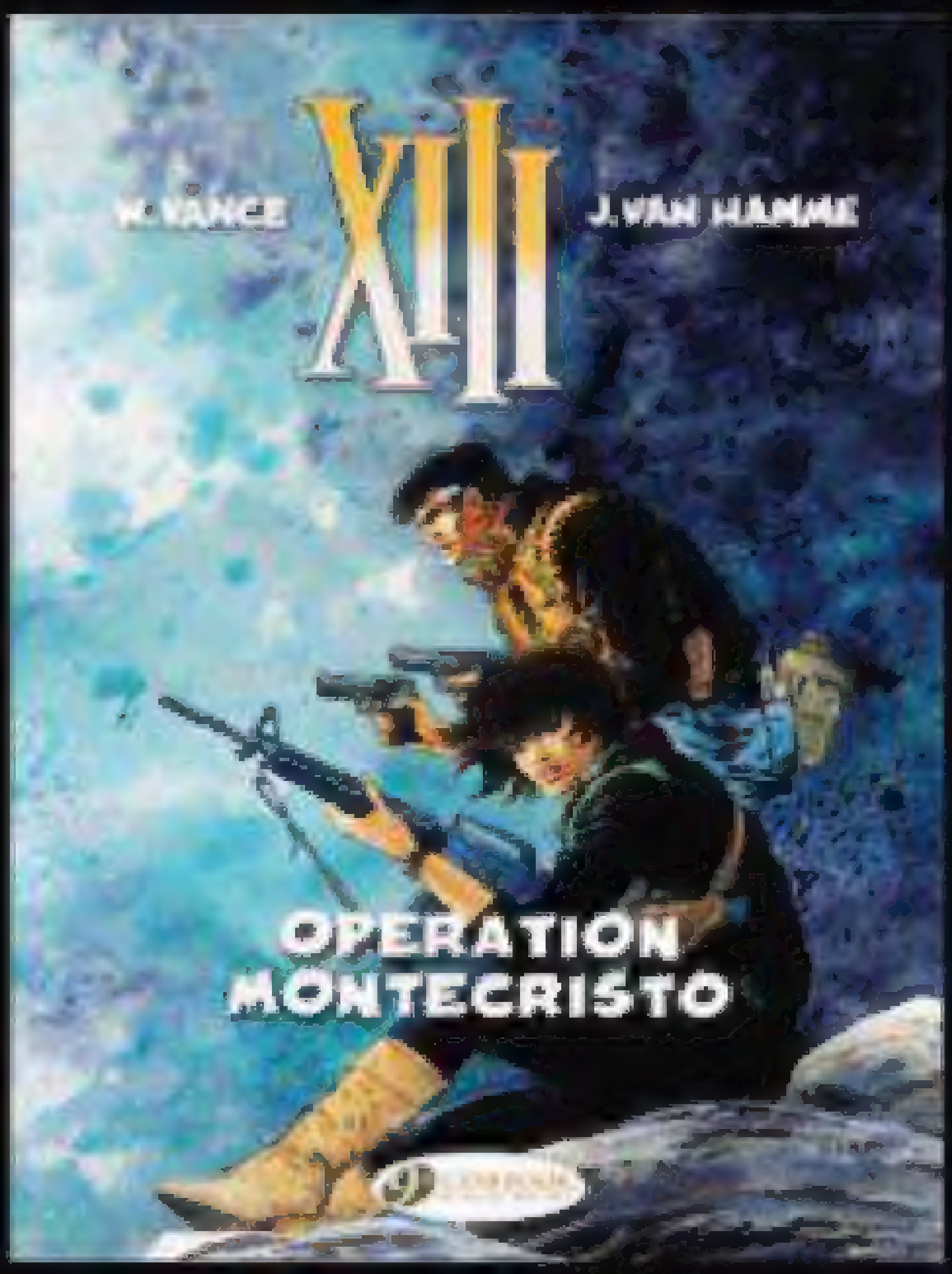
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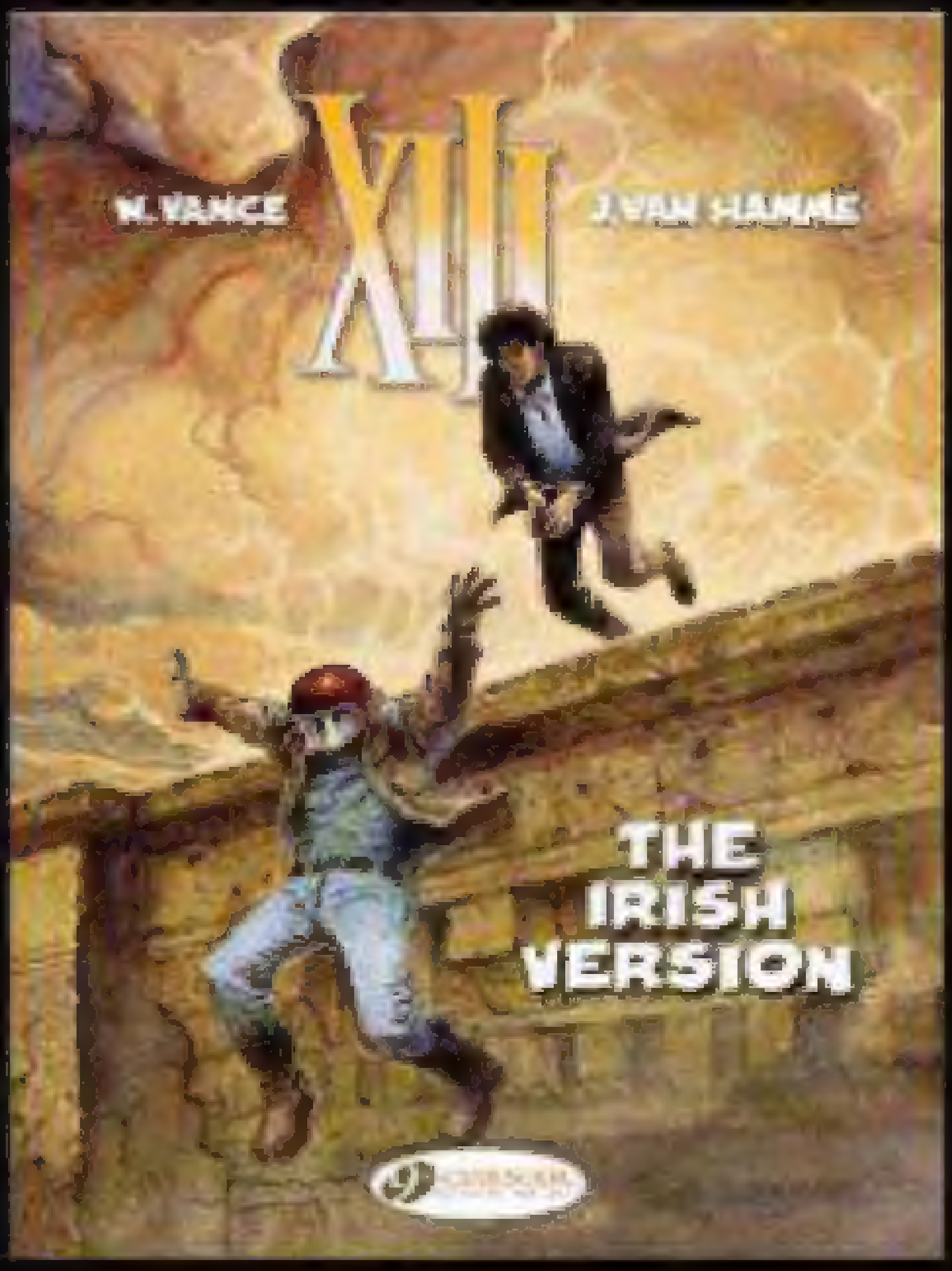
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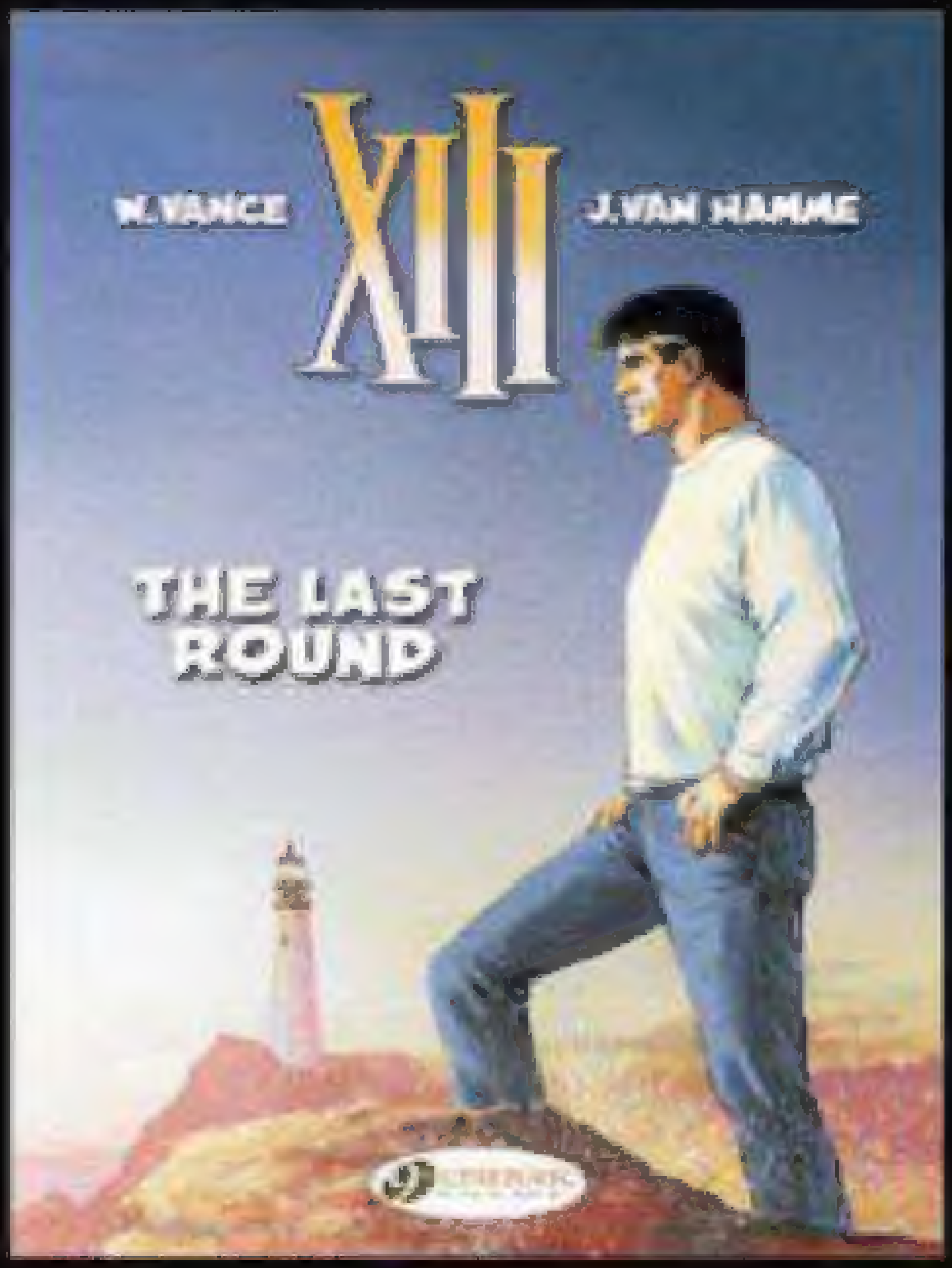
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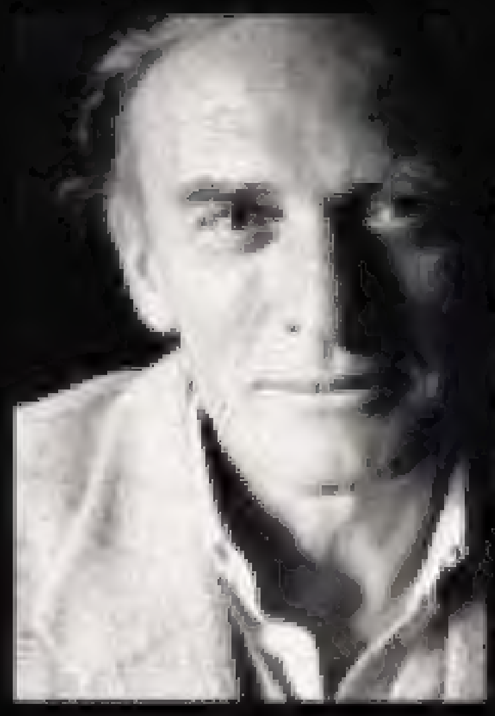

Jean Van Hamme,
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